



The Tabloid

Carol Sarler:
Why Marje's death
caused a storm



Comment

Suzanne Moore:
Sarah the scapegoat
page 19



Cassandra: 'No one but
a fool would fight on so
many fronts ... issues
could leave Blair isolated'

The subversives who lie in wait

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Conservative and Labour assassins came out of the shadows last night, threatening John Major and Tony Blair, and further shaking the unity that both parties are seeking to present to voters.

Lord Tebbit warned from the Right that if the Prime Minister ever tried to bind Britain into European Monetary Union, he would destroy the Conservative Party - with freedom-loving Tories joining others to create a new, potential party of government.

From the Left, an anonymous Labour MP writing as "Cassandra" in *Tribune*, the left-wing weekly, warned that Mr Blair had sown the seeds of his own destruction - making so many enemies that he faced a leadership coup if he became prime minister.

The coincidental attacks revealed the depth of feeling in both parties against the direction being taken by the leaders: Mr Major balancing precariously on the single currency fence; Mr Blair forcing the pace of New Labour in the face of a Parliamentary party, much of which retains traditional Labour values. With everything still to fight for in the

'Tony Blair and his henchfolk need to wake up, and fast, to the fact that the Tories are starting to roll'

Leading article, page 17

long-running campaign for the next election, indicated up 0.6 percentage points to 2.7 per cent last month, and the latest MORI opinion poll showing the Tories up five points in a fortnight, yesterday's exposure of party tensions injected added zest to the battle.

Lord Tebbit told a meeting of the right-wing Conservative 2000 Foundation last night that a Parliament composed largely of "pygmies" had accepted "a slide towards being little more than a provincial assembly with subordinate powers to legislate over a shrinking portion of our national affairs." He found Mr Major's stance over the 48-hour Working Time Directive humiliating, with his talk of bargaining for EU pledges to be honoured.

The former Conservative Party chairman then added insult to that injury, saying there was little difference between the position taken by Mr Major and Mr Blair on monetary union; that they were both straining every sinew to argue that

it should not be an election issue.

"It is time Mr Major realised that an attempt by a Conservative government to shackle this country into a monetary union, which could not but lead to a political union, the state called Europe, would not just split the present Conservative Party," Lord Tebbit said. "It would destroy it."

"All those Conservatives who believe freedom, independence and democracy matter above all other political programmes would leave to join with those of other parties or none who shared that view. Such an alliance need not be a single issue party. It could be a potential party of government."

It emerged yesterday that ministers' fear of the currency controversy had led them to block backbench demands for a full Commons debate about three EU documents on monetary union.

Members of the European Legislation Committee put down a Commons motion demanding a debate, but they

have no power to force the issue on to the floor of the House.

Monetary union also featured as one of the internal Labour crises that faced Mr Blair if he was elected Prime Minister, according to *Tribune's* "Cassandra".

The author, described as a "senior" MP with front-bench experience, said that the single currency, taxation and public spending, the minimum wage, trade union rights, and devolution were all on the immediate agenda for a Labour Government.

"No one but a fool would choose to fight on so many fronts, yet all these issues will come to a head by the end of next year and could combine to leave the leader isolated and weakened beyond recovery."

"With Robin Cook having built the strongest reputation since John Smith," the article said, "there will be no shortage of MPs during next year's summer of discontent prepared to accept that the damage caused by an internal palace coup will be less of a problem for the party in the long-run than the greater risk of being led by a leader whose policies and personal beliefs are shared by only a small minority."



Tebbit: 'An attempt
to shackle this country
into monetary union
would destroy the party'

I started, so now I'll finish ...

Marianne Macdonald
Media Correspondent

"I've started so I'll finish," says Magnus Magnusson, and yesterday the BBC announced he will indeed finish - for good. A quarter of a century of interrogations in the notorious black chair draws to a close next year, with the end of *Mastermind*.

Launched in September 1972, the cerebral quiz has become as much a part of Britain's popular culture as *Coronation Street*. But the BBC said yesterday that the show was drawing to the end of its natural life. "Although the programme is looking as fresh and vital as ever, and is attracting a wide range of contestants - from punk rockers to vicars - no programme lasts forever," said John Whiston, head of youth and entertainment features for BBC Television.

The BBC is working on plans for a documentary to mark the passing of the series, and a "spectacular final". New ideas are also being developed for shows "to take the tradition of *Mastermind* forward for the future".

Much of *Mastermind's* success was due to his unflappable grave host, Magnusson, who was occasionally forced to stop the clock when he stumbled over a particularly abstruse pronunciation.

The Icelandic-born presenter, who is writing a book of memoirs, was knighted in 1989 but cannot use his title, because he is not British.

He was consulted about the decision and agreed with it, the BBC said. "Every good thing has to come to an end - and I would rather it ended with a bang than a whimper. We will be retiring from the scene when we are still on the crest, and I shall treat this last series as a celebration," the presenter commented.

Mastermind questions answered

The highest total score (41) was achieved by Kevin Ashman in 1995. His specialist subjects were Martin Luther King and civil rights movement, the history of the Western film and the Zulu war.

The show was created by Bill Wright, inspired by the grillings Germans gave him as a POW.

The chair is the original chair, used from the first series to the present day. It is a hybrid of two commercially available (in 1972) chairs.

Of the 23 winners, 16 are men and 7 are women.

A taxi driver Fred Housego, tube driver Christopher Hughes and a hospital driver Ian Meadows were winners between 1980 and 1985.

It is TV's second longest running quiz show after *Question of Sport*.

In fact, *Mastermind* had fallen from a high of 20m viewers in its early years in a prime-time slot. As interest waned, it was moved to Monday nights, where it was watched by less than 6 million earlier this year.

But it has been a touchstone for some of the social changes since the early 1970s, not least the huge growth of interest in trivia, which has made fortunes for those who cashed in on the fascination.

The second-longest running quiz on television - second only to *Question of Sport* - its format was created by Bill Wright, a prisoner of war in Germany, to echo the inquisitorial atmosphere in the camps. His main prop was the black chair, in which contestants nervously awaited Mr Magnusson's rapid-fire questions on general knowledge or a special topic of their choice. These have ranged from British poisoners to punk rock and heekeeping.

The sinister like music was also devised to induce the tension of a Nazi war camp. Entitled *Apprehending Monocle* by Neil Richardson, it was commissioned to create a mood of impending doom.

Leading article, page 17



British forces off to Africa today

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

A British general flew to the US by Concorde yesterday to finalise the size, shape and mission of the international force to intervene in Zaire.

As ambassadors to the United Nations met in New York, Lieutenant-General Alex Harley, Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Commitments), was heading for urgent talks in Washington.

The first British reconnaissance teams, including 40 specialists from various branches of

the armed forces, leave for Africa today.

Michael Portillo, Secretary of State for Defence, told the Commons: "We must prepare ourselves now for action." He said British troops would not go if he did not think the mission was "achievable" and said the rules of engagement still needed to be established.

But a large British force, probably headed by 5th Airborne Brigade headquarters, is expected to leave very soon.

The international force will be deployed under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter, which sanctions action by land, sea and air to restore peace between belligerent parties. Although it will focus on humanitarian aid, it will be able to act in a much tougher fashion than UN troops in Bosnia were able to. Further reports, pages 2 and 15

An ostrich dish to die for

Katherine Butler
Brussels

Diners in some of Europe's trendiest restaurants are faced with an alarming dilemma after the outbreak of the latest food scare. A tropical disease which has been likened to the deadly Ebola virus is now threatening to do for booming sales of ostrich meat what BSE has done for beef.

The European Commission slapped an indefinite ban yesterday on imports of live ostriches and ostrich meat from South Africa after an outbreak of Congo-Crimean fever, a highly unpleasant disease which in humans causes massive haemorrhaging and degeneration of the body's organs. EU scientific and veterinary experts advised the ban after the death of a worker in a South African ostrich abattoir. Fifteen other people are reported to be

seriously ill following exposure to the infection in the same premises.

Congo-Crimean fever is a tick-borne disease which in human victims causes internal and external bleeding leading to the collapse of body organs. It is fatal in about 30% of cases. Veterinary experts suspect the infection may be more virulent in ostriches than in other animals. South African researchers are conducting urgent research to establish the risks to human health.

The ban, which could be disastrous for South Africa's thriving ostrich industry, has angered the authorities in Pretoria who said they would lodge an official complaint given that the outbreak was confined to one slaughterhouse.

The EU imports about 800 tonnes a year of ostrich meat from South Africa, according to the European Ostrich Associ-



South Africa's industry is by far the biggest of the 200,000 animals slaughtered annually. 160,000 are raised there.

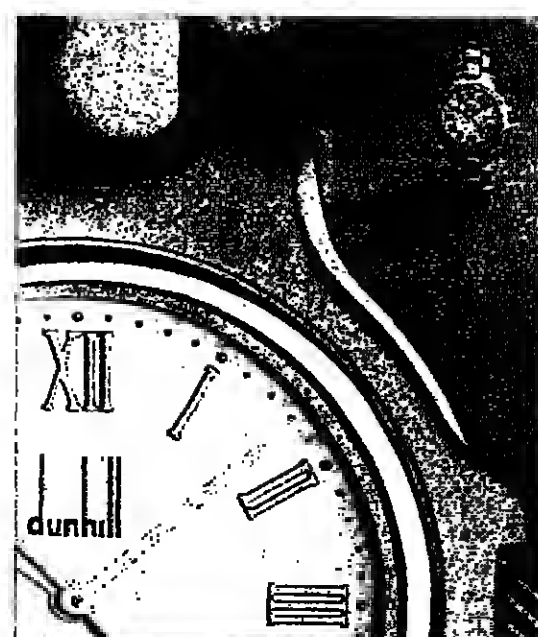
South Africa pioneered ostrich farming over 100 years ago but the industry is in its infan-

cy in Europe. There are some 5,000 ostrich farmers in Europe, mostly in Holland, and more in the US.

Ironically, demand for ostrich, kangaroo and other exotic meats has soared in the wake of the BSE scare which has caused consumption of beef to fall by up to 40%. With a taste and a texture somewhere in between chicken and beef, it is served grilled like steak. It had started to take off in Britain in the last year (unlike the bird, which is flightless). But the latest scare is likely to do it no good, even though it is only supplies from South Africa which have been questioned.

Most of the ostrich meat eaten in Britain comes from domestic producers, and there is no reason to think it carries any health risk at all. Our beef may be suspect, but good old traditional British ostrich is still perfectly safe to eat.

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news

A ringside view at Belshazzar's Feast

It was one of those days when no one could agree what country they were living in.

Recently all parties have signed up for the idea that morals are declining, children revolting, parents hopeless, teachers heroic or feckless (according to whether or not they get beaten up), dangerous mental patients marauding, stalkers stalking and our armed forces are the best in the world. All this is uncontroversial.

But when the economy is the subject of debate, this gloomy consensus goes out of the window. Sir Sydney Chapman (Con Chipping Barnet) started it at Prime Minister's Question Time with praise for the latest fall in unemployment, "the



DAVID AARONOVITCH

largest for two years, underlining yet again the success of the Government's policies".

Yes, said the PM, joblessness was falling "in a way that cannot be said of anywhere else in Europe". Once, of course, it was rising in a way that could not be said of anywhere else in Europe - but that was due to adverse trade cycles.

So here we have a picture which - like the medieval Allegory of Good Government in Siena Town Hall - depicts the British Paradise: a scene of industrious happiness, where contented cod-pieced citizens bustle about their trade, while dusky foreign merchants and investors (dazzled by what they see) wander amongst the white, positive-equitied towers.

Such is not Labour's view. What about today's rise in inflation, asked Tony Blair, inflation which was leading to a sharp rise in long-term interest rates. How could all this be squared with the PM's statements about his inflation targets? In his Allegory of Bad Government, an indebted peo-

ple are encouraged by a squalid leadership to ignore the shabbiness around them, the broken tiles and dead dogs, and spend, spend, spend as though there was tomorrow.

Only after the next election will the bills fall due and the children start to die.

The Prime Minister had quite a simple way of explaining the divergence between these two images - the idiom of Mr Blair and anyone who agreed with him. "I know that the retail price figures are complex to understand" ("Oooh, he's getting nasty!" thought the Tory backbenches, wriggling happily). "So I will explain them to the Right Honourable Gentleman" ("Oh yes!", they

murmured). Mr Blair persisted with one of those Brownian league tables that we are always near the bottom of.

Back came a rampant John Major. "He really doesn't understand!" ("Yes, yes, yes!" they cried). "It's genuine, he doesn't understand it!" ("Oh oh! oh!" they cried). "They are as incapable of running the economy as they are of understanding it!" ("More! More!" they chorused, in something close to an ecstasy of nastiness).

When Tone got up for his third bite he could hardly be heard. Extraordinary animalistic yells, not unlike those that must have been heard round the Colosseum on Eat the Christian Day, or during the best bit

of Belshazzar's Feast, almost drowned him out. The louder it got, the more the Labour leader resorted to visual communication - in the form of an upthrust index finger - as though he might puncture the brown, flatulent bubble of Tory noise in front of him. He didn't.

When he sat down, a happy Major rubbed it in. October's inflation, he said, was the "fourth best we have known in October since the war". Clearly Good Government. But by the time I had got back to my word-processor Labour's computerised rapid-rebuttal unit had calculated that "since 1956, inflation was lower in October 1958/59/60/63/64/67/93 and 94". Bad Government, obviously.

significant shorts

Charges over £70m 'drug laundering'

A money dealer has been charged with laundering £70m of drugs proceeds, it emerged last night. Ussama el-Kurd, owner of the Nottingham Exchange Bureau de change in west London, was charged with converting the sterling into assorted currencies, knowing or suspecting the money to be the proceeds of drug trafficking.

A Customs and Excise spokesman said that el-Kurd, 46, of Nottingham Hill Gate, was charged under the Drugs Trafficking Act 1994 and remanded in custody until a later date following an appearance yesterday before City of London magistrates court.

Governors to decide fate of five-year-old

School governors were meeting last night to decide whether to confirm the permanent exclusion of a five-year-old boy. Ryan Harrison has already been temporarily excluded from Birchfield Primary School, Gildersome, Leeds, for allegedly biting another pupil - a charge his mother denies.

If permanently excluded, he would join the handful of other children at the very beginning of primary school whom teachers have decided are too disruptive to handle. Leeds City Council said the school's head had acted because of Ryan's "unacceptably aggressive behaviour".

More smog is forecast

Poor air quality is forecast in many of Britain's towns and cities today. London's first smog this winter has lingered over the capital throughout this week, produced by a combination of cold, still weather combined with fumes from traffic, industry and power stations. Recording stations at several roadside sites measured nitrogen dioxide levels in the Government's "poor" band.

Earlier in the week, in Leeds, Liverpool, Middlesbrough and Southampton, unsafe levels of benzene, created by traffic, were found. *Nicholas Schoon*

Universities ask to expand

Britain faces economic decline and the growth of an underclass if universities are not allowed to expand, vice-chancellors have told Sir Ron Dearing's inquiry into the future of higher education.

In its response to the inquiry, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals said that anyone who could benefit from going to university should be given the chance to do so. At present the proportion of young people entering higher education is capped at just under a third. The universities say that a rise in the number of 18-year-olds alone could swell the university population by a quarter in the next seven years. *Fran Abrams*

Doctors warn of toy danger

Doctors last night warned parents about a new toy craze that left a baby dead and a young girl critically ill. Both children accidentally swallowed small balloons that are being sold to increasing numbers of children as "water bombs".

In the first of the two incidents in Bradford, West Yorkshire, a six-month-old girl died after one of the balloons became trapped in her throat. Eleven days later, in the same city, a seven-year-old girl sucked the water bomb down her throat after apparently trying to blow it up as if it were a balloon.

The girl was on a life support machine in the intensive care unit of Bradford Royal Infirmary yesterday.

Protest grows over sacking

Parents protesting against the sacking of the headmaster at Cheltenham College have threatened to stop paying fees unless its governors resign.

They plan to withhold the money until Peter Wilkes, dismissed after the school dropped from number 47 to 205 in school league tables, is reinstated. An inquiry into the dispute is being carried out by Tony Higgins, chief executive of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. *Fran Abrams*

Judge attacks in-flight drink

A judge yesterday criticised airlines for making alcohol too easily available after hearing how an American high on drink and drugs turned a Virgin Airlines transatlantic trip into a "flight from hell".

Staff on the flight from Orlando, Florida, to Manchester last month were so alarmed at 37-year-old James Mullahy's violent behaviour that the captain ordered the flight deck doors should be locked.

Mullahy, from Palm Coast, Florida, who was taking medication, was sentenced at Manchester Crown Court to the maximum two years' imprisonment.

Tolstoy stands in by-election

Count Nicolai Tolstoy, the author and historian, was named yesterday as the UK Independence Party candidate for the by-election in the Labour-held seat of Barnsley East. It is expected that the by-election in the staunch mining constituency will take place on 12 November. Alan Sked, leader of the anti-European party, also announced that Dr Richard North, a food and farming consultant, would be its candidate in the by-election for the Tory-held Wirral South seat. *Colin Brown*

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Singing for peace: Badesiti Kakande and members of the African Children's Choir rehearsing in Leeds. The children, many of them victims of war and now in orphanages and schools in Uganda, are touring Europe. One chorister said she hoped their message of peace would be heard by all. *Zaire crisis, page 15* Photograph: Steve Forrest

Ashdown leaves his party history in haze

John Rentoul
Political Correspondent

Is it legitimate to ask politicians if they took drugs when young? Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, insisted that it was not yesterday, when asked the question by an Oxford student journalist.

Mr Ashdown, who is opposed to the legalisation of cannabis, refused to give a direct answer when asked if he had ever taken illegal drugs by a reporter from Oxford University newspaper *Cherwell*.

Interviewed by David Black in his Westminster office, Mr Ashdown hesitated before replying: "I don't... sorry... I do not... the moment you ask me that question, you immediately have the right to ask anyone else that question, and I do not accept the validity of the question."

"What people do in their privacy is entirely up to them. It's not a matter for journalists." Just before the interview ended, Mr Ashdown asked to return to the subject and give a more considered response.

"The answer to your question is that what all of us did in some distant moment of our youth is a matter for them, but it's not a matter for politicians today."

The moment you ask that question you are entitled to go round and ask other people if, he said.

Today's edition of *Cherwell* contains only this second answer, but the whole interview was tape-recorded.

Yesterday, Mr Ashdown elaborated further: "What matters is where I stand today - I am totally opposed to the legalisation of drugs."

He said he had visited drug-ridden estates in Peckham, south London, and Moss Side, Manchester. "I suggest that anybody who believes in legalisation should do what I did - go and live there for a few days

and you will soon see the effects of drugs that are so corrosive and do damage to our society. Legalisation is not an option."

The issue is divisive within the Liberal Democrats, who voted to set up an inquiry into the decriminalisation of cannabis at their 1994 party conference. The motion was moved by Chris Davies, the MP elected last year in the Littleborough and Saddleworth by-election, who was subjected to sustained attack from Labour for being "high on tax and soft on drugs".

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, has said that he has never used illegal drugs, although he did once add, in a reference

to President Clinton's difficulties with the same issue, "if I had, you can be sure I would have inhaled".

A spokesman for the Prime Minister said: "It is an absurd question to ask. As far as we know, the Prime Minister has never been asked it. If he were asked, the answer would be 'No'."

David Evans, the robustly populist Tory MP for Welwyn Hatfield, demanded Mr Ashdown's head. "If he has taken illegal drugs - however long ago does not matter - then he should do the honourable thing and resign from the Commons," he said.

Red faces over drugs files theft

Files detailing Customs and Excise's most sensitive operations against drugs dealers have been stolen from a car in south London, writes Ian Burrell.

The incident is the latest in a series of embarrassing revelations concerning police and customs officers which are undermining the war on organised drugs smuggling.

Each of the stolen files would have contained intelligence reports on major drug traffickers,

with names of informants and police and customs officers working on the operation.

A Customs spokesman said: "We have taken what steps we can to minimise the damage caused to any operations in which the officer was involved."

A report will be sent to the Crown Prosecution Service next week on one of Britain's most disastrous drugs investigations. Detectives from Thames Valley police have spent two years

and eight months on the relationship between one of the country's biggest drugs barons, a Tory MP and police officers.

The investigation, code-named Operation Mantis, was ordered by the Police Complaints Authority after the collapsed prosecution of Brian Charrington, the mastermind of the import of 1.5 tonnes of cocaine into Teesside in 1992. The report will also refer to Tim Devlin, MP for Stockton South.

Blair branded weakest leader in memory

The following is an edited version of the article in *Tribune* by Cassandra, said to be a senior Labour MP.

Given the results in Tony Blair's Road to the Manifesto plebiscite and his iron grip on the party machine, it seems both bizarre and unbelievable to suggest that he could become the shortest serving prime minister of this century. But behind the facade of unity and discipline the reality is that Tony Blair's position as leader of the Labour Party is weaker than of any leader in memory.

The last time a Labour leader faced anything like a serious challenge was when Harold Wilson stood against Hugh Gaitskill in 1961. Even with such a formidable opponent, Gaitskill was able to survive.

Anonymous 'Tribune' article challenges fitness of Labour chief

But the success of previous Labour leaders has rested on loyal support from the right wing majority inside the Parliamentary Labour Party and a close working relationship with the main trade union leaders.

This is Blair's weakness. He is unaware of just how widespread is the dissatisfaction and outright anger at the style of his leadership and policies among those MPs who put him in the leadership. Starting with the anger over choice of a school for his son and running up to the expensive irrelevance of the *Road to the Manifesto*, I have never known Labour MPs to be so bitterly and personally critical of their leader.

Blair has also squandered the traditional loyalty of the trade union leaders. It may get good headlines in the Tory press to have your spin doctors rubbish Bill Morris and John Edmonds but this overlooks the fact Blair will have to rely on these men to save off conference defeats once Labour is in government.

To make matters worse there is also the hint that Tony Blair is in a minority within his own Shadow Cabinet on key issues concerning the welfare state and trade union rights. In the past, leaders could rely upon a solid block of supporters in the Cabinet, but the scale of mutual loathing between Tony Blair, John Prescott, Gordon Brown and Margaret Beck-

ett is so blatant it has become public knowledge.

It is against this background that a Labour government will take office next spring and face several crises. Within the first few months, Blair will have to resolve the conflict between Brown and Cook on whether or not Britain should be in the first wave of EU states joining monetary union. Gordon Brown intends to introduce a mini-Budget to replace what we inherit from Kenneth Clarke thus opening all the major fissures on taxation and public spending.

The attempt to push through Scottish and Welsh devolution is unlikely to be made any eas-

ier, whatever the outcome of the referendum plans, as English voters will have no say and those dinosaurs on the back benches who are opposed to devolution will not feel inhibited about re-running the wrecking game that wasted so much of our time in the Seventies. While it has, so far, been only the hard Left and the Trotskyite groupings who have been ranting on about these issues, once pre-election unity is no longer required, all these changes have the potential to reawaken the sort of civil war that disfigured the party during the Bennite challenge.

No one but a fool would choose to fight on so many fronts yet all these issues will come to a head by the end of next year and could combine to leave the leader isolated and weakened beyond recovery.

With Robin Cook having built the strongest parliamentary reputation since John Smith, there will be no shortage of MPs prepared to accept that the damage caused by an internal palace coup will be less of a problem in the long run than the greater risk of being led by a leader whose policies and personal beliefs are shared by only a small minority of the PLP.

When power starts to slip away, Blair will find that rule books and constitutions cannot ward off the real political forces that come into play. Labour could soon find that it too has the "men in grey suits" it thought were unique feature of the Tory party.

In *Radio Times* this week, Andrew Duncan analyses the neurologist Dr. Oliver Sacks, about his problems, his patients and his personality. You'd be mad to miss it.

RadioTimes

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT.

طريقنا من الامل

The Church divided

A gay service has become the biggest row since women's ordination

Andrew Brown

The service of gay and lesbian celebration at Southwark Cathedral tomorrow has become the focus of the biggest row in the Church of England since the ordination of women.

More than 2,000 people will travel from all over the country for a day-long festival to mark the 20th anniversary of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement. It will be attended by three English bishops, supported by the heads of four Anglican churches around the world, among them Desmond Tutu, and attacked by traditionalists with an impassioned mixture of prayer and propaganda.

More than 50 churches will hold gatherings of prayer and repentance against the service. Most of them belong to Reform, a network of conservative evangelical churches which is also opposed to the ordination of women. The Reform churches have threatened various degrees of separation from the official church over the issue.

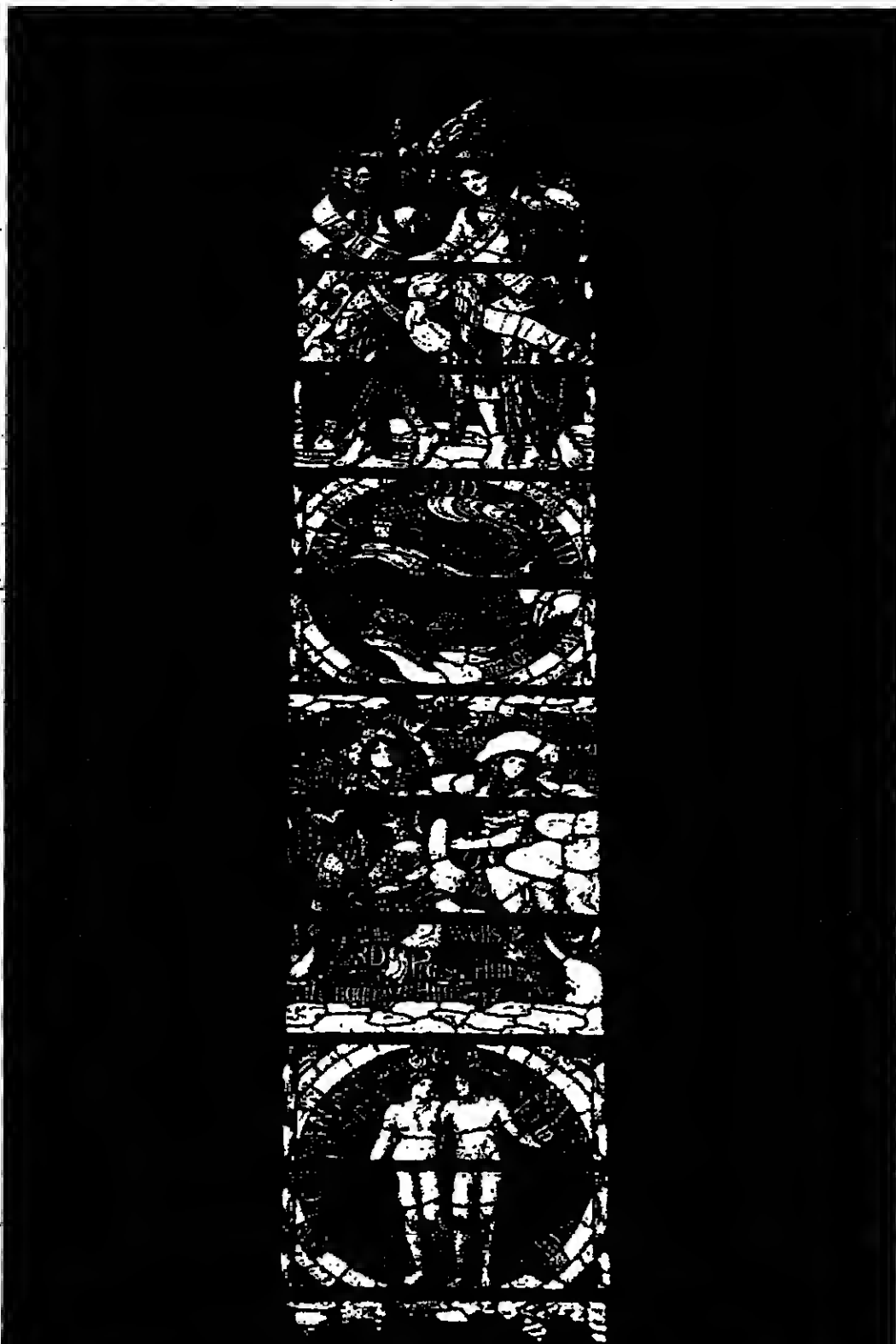
Reform leaders insist they are not homophobic, and that they treat gays as individuals compassionately. "This service is not about a pastoral problem," said the Rector of Jesmond, the Rev David Holloway, yesterday. "You're dealing with a political issue, about how to order society and the church." The service has shocked evangelical opinion inside and outside the church.

Supporters of the movement see it as an opportunity for the church to show the world that homosexuals can have an honoured place, after centuries of persecution. Caught in the middle are the cathedral authorities, and most bishops of the Church of England, who feel they can neither support open homosexuality nor force it back into the closet.

The only thing to unite both sides is agreement that the Church's present position is ridiculous and illogical. In fact, there are at least three positions. The first, adopted by the General Synod in 1987, is that "homosexual genital acts... fall short of the ideal... and must be met with a call to repentance". This coexists uneasily with a House of Bishops report in 1991 which said the laity might in some circumstances have homosexual relationships, but priests might not. Both these statements contradict the third, unofficial, position, which was the one actually adopted by the House of Bishops until very recently: "Don't do it in the street and frighten the horses".

The most recent official position – the bishops' 1991 report – is not far in practice from the position of other mainstream denominations, such as Catholics and Methodists. There, just as in the Church of England, it is possible for homosexual lay people to be accepted in some congregations. What makes the Church of England a uniquely difficult case is the existence of a fairly large and self-confident body of gay priests.

Both Lord Runcie, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, and the former Bishop of Durham, Dr David Jenkins, admitted to having knowingly



All God's creatures: Men and women in stained glass at Southwark Cathedral. Photograph: David Rose

Battle hymn of the gay community

A hymn written for the Southwark festival by the former Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway, the Rt Rev Derek Rawcliffe.

Onward, Christian homos,
Marching out with pride,
Queers and fags and drag
queens
Walking side by side.
We are not divided,
All one body we,
Gay and lesbian Christians,
For equality.

Onward Christian homos

Marching side by side,
Glad to own our gayness,
Glad to walk with pride
We will not be hidden,
We will not be dumb,
Out of fearful closets
Gladly we have come,
Christian gays and lesbians,
We will now be heard,
Claiming our acceptance,
By our loving Lord

Onward Christian homos
Marching side by side,
Glad to own our gayness,
Glad to walk with pride

Onward Christian homos,
Raise a joyful song,
Though the church may spurn us,
That's where we belong.
Bishops shall not fright us,
Homophobes must flee,
Hand in hand we celebrate
Our sexuality.

Onward Christian homos
Marching side by side,
Glad to own our gayness,
Glad to walk with pride

donated south of the Thames, while the diocese of London covers the city north of the river.

The two have much the highest concentration of gay priests in England. One well-placed observer suggested to me that under the previous Bishop of London, the Rt Rev David Hope, there were about 200 priests in the diocese who had active homosexual relationships. Dr Hope himself was one of ten bishops "outed" by a pressure group, and subsequently

announced that his sexuality was a "grey area", though one that he had never explored. He is now Archbishop of York.

There is no prospect of an early resolution. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, has repeatedly appealed for Christians to concentrate on more urgent matters. But conservatives, like Dr Holloway, see this as an issue on which they can defeat creeping liberalism, while to the gays and their supporters, it is a simple issue of justice.

'The gay movement is our cathedral if it is anyone's'

The case for



Sara Maitland, novelist and theologian

There is something ironic at best, and frightening at worst, that the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement's 20th anniversary gathering in Southwark Cathedral tomorrow should need defending, or justifying.

Homosexual acts are legal – and have been for nearly 30 years. The Church of England, along with most of the other mainstream denominations, has concluded that homosexuality is an identity not a deed, that gay is something that you are, rather than something that you do – and a state of being *canon* of its nature (and God's nature) be "a sin". (That some gay people would dispute this definition is irrelevant in relation to whether or not the Church of England should allow the meeting: its own position and definition are what count here.)

Despite these facts, rampant prejudice – in the forms of increased danger of violence, employment discrimination, housing restrictions, permitted public behaviour, access to children, to name but a few – continues.

Daily, through public vilification, negative representation, and complex disingenuous lies, non-gay people have their prejudices fed and their desire to hate encouraged by our media, our heterosexist culture, and our Government's policies.

This causes real mental distress (the vulnerability to depression, self-harm and suicide of young gay and lesbian humans who are very often wantonly deprived of access to those who could help them is well documented).

Homosexuals – quite separate from their own actual sexual practice – are

treated as and feel themselves to be marginalised, villainised, isolated and scapegoated. This makes lesbians and gay men, as individuals and as a community, a group who have a specific, gospel-based, Jesus-led, call on the Churches' charity and support.

The whole theory of sexuality is currently an issue of interest to the wider Christian community: all Christians have an obligation to discuss, debate and consider it. A group of Christians who are personally concerned with this pressing question wish to come together and do so.

LGCM is a Christian organisation. Its members therefore are a part of the people of God, the Body of Christ, the Church. It is our cathedral as much as any church's.

Simply, the burden of proof lies not with LGCM but with those who object to the LGCM gathering, because the only "reason" I can think of is that there are people who cannot tolerate anyone else having prayer and fun from which they have let their fears exclude them.

'The Provost just cannot hope to get away with it'

The case against

The Rev Geoffrey Kirk, of St Stephen's, Lewisham

That the Church of England is in two minds about homosexuality is hardly a secret. It is a church in which archbishops of York seem to inhabit grey areas, and bishops of Durham perhaps something altogether more colourful. But the church is struggling to come to a common mind, and shows every sign of reaching a shared opinion, as it is bound by its title deeds to do, with a proper pastoral concern for all its members and in due deference to the authority of scripture.

Such a process of discernment is necessarily slow and reflective. The "rights" of homosexuals – if they are rights – are not the only issues at stake. As with other contentious issues – marriage discipline, for example, or the ordination of women – fundamental theological questions are raised.

The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement has effectively decided

most of these issues to its own satisfaction. It has believed in absolute parity between homosexual and heterosexual relations in the ethical understanding of the church. This is far from the position of the General Synod or even of the House of Bishops in its document, *Issues in Human Sexuality*. Why then should the Provost of Southwark, Colin Slee, have allowed the movement use of the cathedral for a celebration of its 20th anniversary of campaigning to overturn that position?

Mr Slee argues that cathedrals in some sense belong to the nation, and that in an established church they

should be open to all who wish to pray in them. He does not pry into the financial dealings of city companies who request carol services, and in the same way he does not ask questions about what the members of the LGCM respectively, get up to under their diverts.

This bold and mendacious Erastianism must command a grudging admiration. But the provost cannot hope to get away with it. The decision of the Chapter at Southwark to allow the celebration cannot be passed off as open or even, handiness. They chose to favour, in an all-out political campaign for the soul of the Church of England, an opinion which the church at large has only recently rejected.

If they uphold the principles and aims of LGCM let them say so unequivocally. Then at least they could hope to command a degree of respect.

Farewell to innocence as shops ban children from seeing Santa alone

Jojo Moyes

It was one of the more depressing revelations of Christmas present – the news that some shops have banned unaccompanied children from sitting on Santa's knee because of fears of child abuse allegations.

Children's welfare charities and a leading children's lawyer yesterday backed the decision by shops, including Selfridges, to follow the policy, in order to avoid any threat of legal action.

Peggy Ray, a member of the Solicitors' Family Law Association's children's committee, said it was "common sense" to have a guardian in Santa's grotto.

"It is a potential opportunity for a determined abuser to abuse, so as a matter of common sense and good practice it would be advisable to have another person there," Ms Ray said.

"I don't think shops have to check their Santas out. Having a register of convicted paedophiles would help, although there are a huge number of sus-



Seasonal image no longer: shops fearing legal action will no longer allow youngsters to sit on Santa's knee

pected paedophiles out there who would not be on it."

A spokesman for the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children said: "Some young people can be scared of visiting unfamiliar environments and meeting strangers." The NSPCC would recommend that adults accompany their children when visiting Santa Claus.

Richard Cain, manager of Clay's Garden Centre in Sunderland, where children must be accompanied by a parent, said it was a sensible precaution. "It is just a common sense policy that we have had for a couple of years. It's a sad sign of our times."

Selfridges in Oxford Street said it had always required parents to be present when

children entered Santa's Grotto. A spokeswoman said: "We have had the same Santa for years and he knows how to behave with children. But we are dealing with young children and they can be quite frightened. We want to make it the best experience for them."

She later added that the policy of insisting children be accompanied was less to do with fears of abuse allegations than parents using Santa's Grotto as a creche while they did their shopping.

Jane Kilpatrick, associate director of Kidscape, a charity which aims to help prevent child abuse, said yesterday it was necessary to maintain a sense of perspective.

"We know that children need positive role models. What could be more positive than Santa? We have to get a grip here," she said. "It's great that shops are aware... but having said that if we can't trust Santa, whither civilisation?"

Ms Kilpatrick added that she knew of no occasions where a Santa had been accused of

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After six years in jail Britain's longest serving detainee waits to hear his fate

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

A Sikh separatist, who has been held in jail for the last six years pending deportation, will hear today whether the European Court of Human Rights is to clear the way for his release.

A ruling by the Strasbourg court in favour of Karamjit Singh Chahal, who has been in Bedford jail since August 1990 pending deportation to India on grounds of national security, could entitle him to compensation of up to £200,000.

The long-awaited decision follows a unanimous opinion by all 17 members of the European Commission on Human Rights condemning his treatment by the UK.

Mr Chahal, who was given indefinite leave to live in Britain

in 1974, has acknowledged his role as a supporter of a separate Sikh state in the Punjab but has always denied terrorist activity.

The Government has accused him of masterminding and financing terrorism in India, but has never produced the evidence. In the 1980s, he was arrested three times and charged twice – but evidence in both the cases against him was later discredited.

Mr Chahal claimed asylum when he was first threatened with deportation in 1990. On a visit to Amritsar in 1984, he was one of a mass arrest of Sikhs by local police. He says his treatment left him with scars all over his body and permanently deaf in one ear and he fears he will be killed if he is made to return to India.

Because his case involved

"national security", the only opportunity he has had to fight deportation in Britain was an appearance before the Government's security advisers, without legal representation, sight of the evidence or chance to cross-examine witnesses.

The EC advised the court that the UK had breached four of the guarantees in the European Convention of Human Rights: the right not to be subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment, the right not to be unlawfully detained, the right to family life and the right to an effective legal remedy.

If the case goes against the Government today, it will be under an obligation to introduce a proper hearing for intended deportees who are accused of terrorism, and allow legal representation.



Karamjit Singh Chahal, the Sikh separatist, may have the way to his release cleared in Strasbourg today

Photograph: Brian Harris

The question of compensation will also loom. Under UK law, Mr Chahal might expect to receive around £95 for each day of any wrongful detention, although the final amount of any

award would be for the Strasbourg court to decide.

One of Mr Chahal's most persistent complaints has been the effect of his detention on his family life. His wife, Darshan,

visits him daily in jail but his daughter, Kiranpreet, and son, Bikramjit, spent their teenage years with their father in prison.

David Burgess, his solicitor, said: "We hope for an out-

come which will enable Mr Chahal to start on the formidable task of rebuilding his family life."

Defeat would be particularly embarrassing for the Gov-

ernment because of the degree to which accepted legal process has been suspended, coupled with the sheer length of Mr Chahal's detention on untested evidence.

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Army faced march on empty stomach

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

The supply of food to the armed forces was jeopardised during the introduction of a new contract which was aimed at making savings in the £95m per year budget, according to a report by the National Audit Office.

The forces were nearly at the point of having to march on an empty stomach because orders for food were not reaching the kitchens as a result of 70 major computer programme "difficulties".

Such was the chaos during the introduction of the new contract, in October 1994, and for several months afterwards, that NAAFI, which had been awarded the contract without a competitive tendering process, had no idea where its stocks of food were being held and whether deliveries had been made or not. NAAFI was then unable to fulfil orders within the

48 hours specified within the contract, but was allowed 72 hours. The report in the commercial sector is just 24 hours.

The NAO says that the problem was caused by the haste with which the Government wanted to introduce the new contract with NAAFI, which is seen as a possible prelude to full privatisation. Although advisers Ernst & Young had said that the new arrangements should be introduced within three or four years, the Ministry of Defence rushed the change through in 21 months.

The new contract involved NAAFI taking complete responsibility for food supply to all 1,700 units, which feed around 100,000 personnel, rather than responsibility being divided between NAAFI and the MoD.

The report reveals that healthy eating habits have not percolated through to Our Boys. It shows that the armed

forces' annual consumption includes all the elements of high cholesterol breakfast: 29 million breakfast sausages, 738,000 catering sized tins of baked beans, 30 million eggs and 260,000 kilograms of streaky bacon. Steak and kidney pies, 648,000 of which were supplied, seem to be the favourite dinner in the Mess Hall.

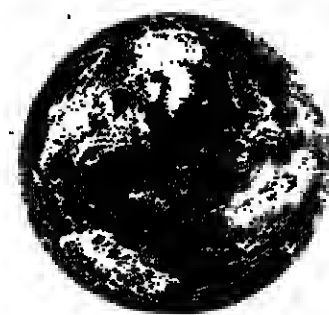
And some food was even healthier. In October 1995, cadets at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst were provided with a batch of striploin beef which was six weeks out of date. The report says that NAAFI was unable to trace the boxes and "a product recall was not done". Similarly, 1.5 tonnes of rotten rice was distributed before it was noticed that the entire batch – 20 tonnes – was unfit to eat.

Ministry of Defence: The Supply of Food to the Armed Forces. National Audit Office, £8.95.

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HIV surgeon is cleared to operate

Landmark decision by West Glasgow NHS Trust gives hope to infected health workers

Nick Harris

A Glasgow surgeon yesterday became the first doctor in Britain infected with the HIV virus to be given the all-clear to resume surgical practice.

Professor George Browning, 55, an internationally renowned ear, nose and throat specialist, was given the news by his employers, the West Glasgow NHS Trust, following a year's deliberation and advice from an advisory body at the Department of Health. He said: "It's fantastic news. It seems like an awfully long wait for the decision, but now it's been made. I can get on with things. I'm in superb health and hopefully I've got a long career ahead of me."

Since going public with his HIV status nearly two years ago, Professor Browning has been restricted to a non-surgical role, conducting clinics and teaching at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary and at Gartnavel General Hospital.

He said: "The hospitals have quite lengthy waiting lists for the surgery I perform, so my return will help with that." He hopes to be back in theatre before Christmas.

Professor Browning specialises in problems of the middle ear and the type of surgery he will undertake is performed with long-handled instruments, where the surgeon is "remote" from the patient. He is now able to recommence five such otological procedures, which are deemed risk-free to patients by the Department of Health UK Advisory Panel for Health Care Workers Infected With Blood Borne Viruses (UKAP), the expert body to whom he first appealed for advice about his case in October last year.

"Basically, I will be able to perform all forms of surgery that would help a patient's hearing," said Professor Browning. "If you look at the medical facts, there is no reason why I shouldn't go back. Patient fears are not grounded in fact, and it is my job to dispel such fears."

Precautions will be taken with tool-handling procedure, as well as normal procedure, to guarantee safety. He will also be subject to regular check-ups.



Safe hands: Professor George Browning (inset) yesterday after the announcement that he can resume ENT surgery

Photograph: Drew Farrell

No British health worker has ever transmitted the HIV virus to a patient. According to International Disease control studies, there has only ever been one case of a patient being infected by a health worker.

No patients will be disadvantaged by opting not to be treated by Professor Browning. Professor Browning, who is married with three grown-up children, is bisexual and believes he contracted the virus through gay sex. In December 1994, the press discovered that a surgeon in Glasgow had tested HIV positive and named the

they object to having a surgeon who is HIV positive. "No one will be under any pressure to give their consent," he said. "However, I hope Professor Browning will be shown support by their choice."

No patients will be disadvantaged by opting not to be treated by Professor Browning.

Professor Browning, who is married with three grown-up children, is bisexual and believes he contracted the virus through gay sex. In December 1994, the press discovered that a surgeon in Glasgow had tested HIV positive and named the

wrong doctor. Professor Browning made his condition public to avoid further confusion.

Since appealing to UKAP a year ago, he has been waiting while his employers, with whom the final decision rested, considered his case. The West Glasgow NHS Trust set up a special working committee to consider patient safety as well as medical, ethical and legal issues. The Chairman of the Trust, Derek Mason, said: "As a provider of public health care services, our priority has been to handle our deliberations prudently and responsibly."

Nick Partridge, chief executive of the Terence Higgins Trust, welcomed the decision and said: "It is clear that Professor Browning presents no risk to his patients. This is a sensible and mature decision based on the reality of how HIV can be transmitted rather than on public and media hysteria."

By the end of 1995, there had been 25,635 reported cases of HIV infection in the UK. Yesterday's announcement will set a precedent in the UK for health workers rights. Professor Browning said that he hopes the decision would encourage other

infected health workers to come forward without fear of discrimination.

"Equally, it means they have a precedent with lines of discussion as to what is and what is not safe for patients."

For employees who work in non-medical areas, the case may also be a landmark, leading to fewer barriers to employment, such as insurance costs to employers which are 200 to 300 per cent higher for infected workers.

Professor Browning said: "The issue is public knowledge, not HIV."



Teacher appeals against bullies' ruling

Fran Abrams
Education Correspondent

A teacher who let a pupil smack a group of bullies with a ruler was given a final written warning yesterday after refusing to make a firm undertaking not to do the same again.

Brenda Davies was told at the end of a two-hour disciplinary hearing that if the incident at Tennyson Road Primary School in Luton was repeated, she could be sacked.

Mrs Davies was removed from her infant class last week and asked to teach older children after she allowed five-year-old Joe Middleton to smack six other children on the hand.

She has defended her actions, and has written to the Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Shephard, to appeal for her support. Yesterday, she said that she had acted in line with the school's anti-bullying policy.

"The headmaster maintains that what I did amounted to corporal punishment. I believe my action was in the children's best interests. I love children, I do whatever is best for them," she said.

Mrs Davies has 14 days in which to decide whether to appeal against the decision.

However, a statement from parents of all the children involved, including Joe Middleton, condemned the teacher for contacting the media.

"She escalated a simple playground game which had got a bit too boisterous into a major incident. We as a group of mothers are working together to heal the rifts that have now been created between our children," it said.

A spokesman for Bedfordshire County Council, one of whose officers attended the hearing with the school's head teacher, said Mrs Davies would return to school today.

"For now, everyone is concerned to ensure that the school gets back to its normal routine, and that it is able to concentrate on what really matters here, and that is the continuing education of all the children," he said.

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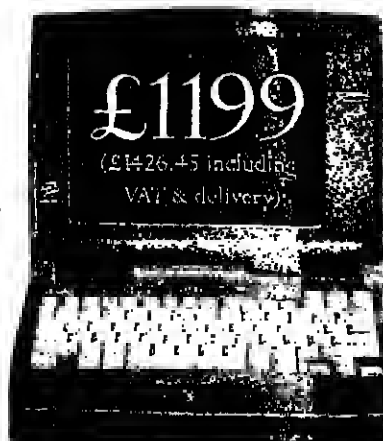


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news

£40m prize from lottery gives British sport its biggest ever win

Mike Rowbottom
Athletics Correspondent

Britain's Olympic medallists yesterday welcomed the announcement of the largest funding package for sport in the country's history.

Announcing the initiative yesterday, John Major, the Prime Minister, said the Government would use the fund to put "sport back where it belongs - at the heart of school life".

The Sports Council will use a £50m-a-year "Talent Fund" to offer subsistence grants to talented individuals, on the back of an expected boost to National Lottery funding from the new mid-week draw.

The World Class Performance Programme, launched yesterday, will see new funding for up to 4,500 competitors who will share £20m in annual individual grants from National Lottery money, with another £20m going to governing bodies. The first individual payments are due next March.

The grants will be particularly welcome after Britain's disastrous showing in the Atlanta Olympic Games earlier this year.

"This is going to be a great confidence booster for British competitors," said Paul Palmer, winner of Britain's only swimming medal at the Atlanta Olympics. "When you line up for an Olympic final, there is a tendency to think your opponents are bound to be that much better prepared. This means we can compete on level terms in future."

The new scheme offers grants of £15,000 to £17,000 to Britain's best sportsmen and women, although "elite individuals" - those ranked in the world's top 10 with world or with Olympic medal potential - could get a maximum annual

award of £28,000. The question of whether payments will be tax-free is still a matter of negotiation.

That kind of money would enable Palmer to locate himself closer to a top-class training facility. Before the Atlanta Games, he had to use a 25-metre school pool in Yarborough, Lincolnshire. In term time, he had to rope off a lane from splashing children; outside term time the pool was shut.

"It got me to an Olympic silver, which isn't bad," he said.

"But I don't think it could take me that one step further."

Ben Ainslie, the 19-year-old Olympic silver medallist in the Laser class sailing competition, said the new system would help him with travelling costs and allow him to take his coach to more events. Last year he only went to two out of 18 regattas.

"I also think it will keep a lot more people in the sport now they know this funding is available," he added.

Details of the plan were announced on the second anniversary of the sale of the first National Lottery ticket.

There has been widespread criticism of the lengthy consultation period since the announcement on April 1 last year that Lottery funding could be made available for athletes as well as facilities for competition and training.

The delay appeared even less acceptable in the light of the poor overall British medal tally in Atlanta. But Sir Rodney

Walker, the Sports Council chairman, defended the procedure.

"We could have launched this programme earlier," he said. "We could have gone off half-cocked, but we weren't ready... As a result of this careful planning, the programme is bigger, better and directly meets the needs of the coaches and competitors."

The new annual figure of £20m for individual competitors is 10 times what the Sports Aid Foundation, the main funding

body for the last 21 years, has been able to offer.

"We were operating with inadequate resources, which meant we had to be extremely selective," said Noel Nagle, the SAF director. "We could only help 150 members of the British team for Atlanta, which left around 200 others unsupported. For the next Olympics, this scheme is going to help everybody."

The new scheme will be tied in with former Test cricketer Sir Colin Cowdrey's initiative to help encourage sports in schools and spread the love of sport among youngsters.

National Heritage Secretary Virginia Bottomley said the announcement to provide the highest-level support for top sports stars was made possible because the Government has changed the rules on how National Lottery funds can be spent.

"Since its launch in 1994, almost £500m has been raised for sport, money which has provided much-needed support to sports projects right across the country, grass roots support which has seen awards made to 155 bowls clubs, 57 hockey clubs, 202 tennis clubs and many more."

"At the elite level, the Sports Council will announce soon its decision on the English National Stadium, and in the new year the United Kingdom Sports Council and my Department will announce the winning British Academy of Sport bid," she said.

Funds no longer on ice for skate star

Nicky Gooch believes that the latest announcement on National Lottery funding for competitors could be good news for him. But he is waiting for confirmation before he starts celebrating, writes Mike Rowbottom.

The 23-year-old from Roehampton, who earned a speed-skating bronze medal at the 1994 Winter Olympics, has seen his level of assistance fluctuate alarmingly in the last three years.

Before his breakthrough, he found himself in the position common to so many British sportsmen and women in recent years - scraping a living, relying on the support of parents and friends.

"I was getting small grants from the Sports Aid Foundation, but we were talking a matter of a few hundred pounds, which was nowhere near enough," he said. "Without my parents' support I wouldn't have been able to make it."

He was working at the Guildford Spectrum ice centre, and getting time on the ice in lieu. But even then, it was a matter of having three training sessions per week due to the pressure of bookings.

Meanwhile his rivals in Korea, Canada, the United States and Italy were all getting as much time on the ice as they needed, training full-time in specialist groups.

That was the challenge. And Gooch, as is the British way, succeeded despite everything.

It has been such a struggle for British athletes," Gooch said. "The lack of funding has hindered everyone's development. It has basically been a case that if you haven't got a medal, you can't get a decent grant."

He hopes that yesterday's news will change all that.



Nicky Gooch: 'Without my parents' support I wouldn't have been able to make it' Photograph: Allsport

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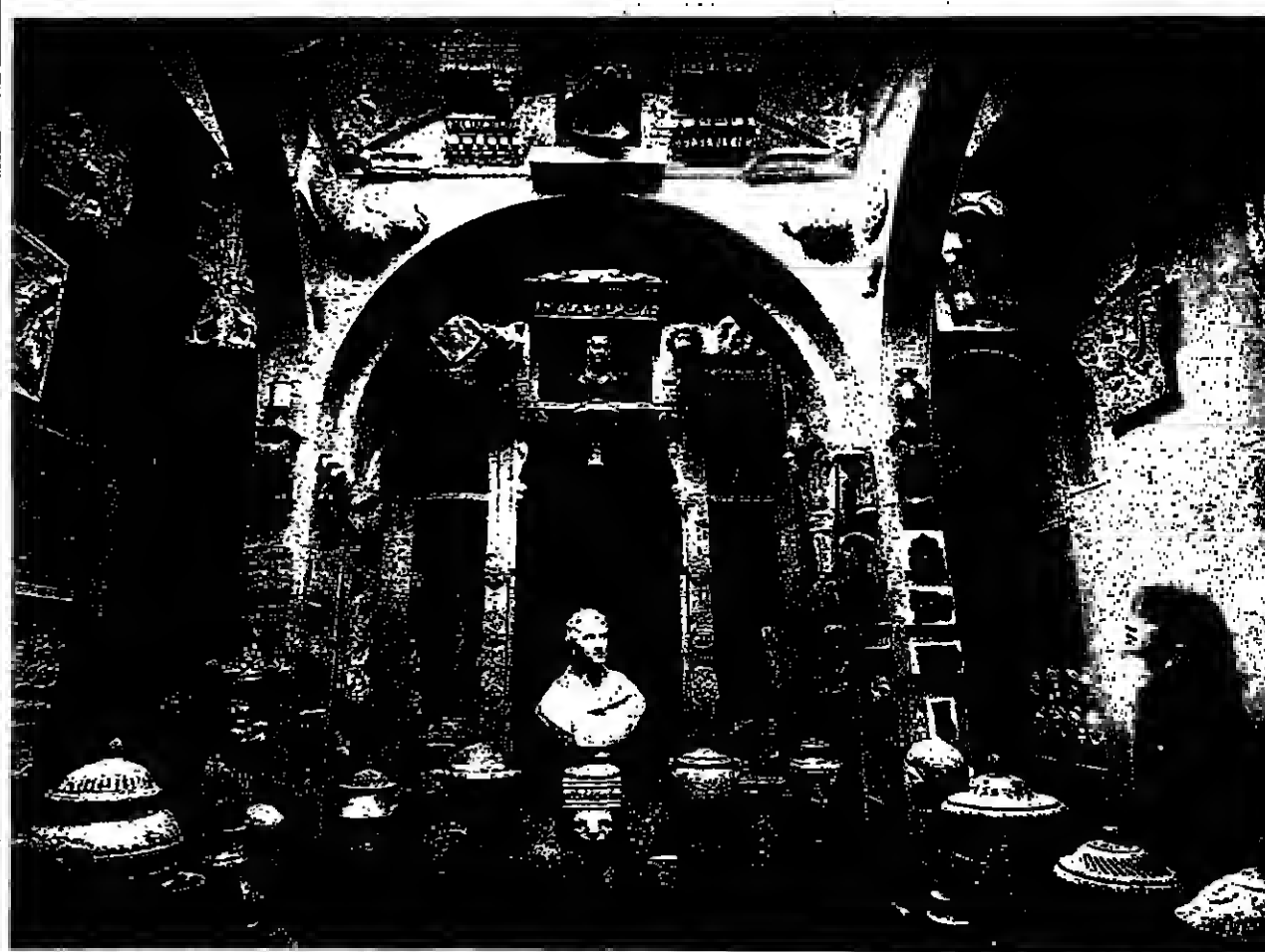
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Treasure store: Sir John Soane wanted his Lincoln's Inn Fields houses kept as he left them Photograph: David Rose

£500,000 lottery cash helps museum buy up its neighbour

Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

Thousands of sketches and designs by the 18th-century architects Robert and James Adam will go on public display following a lottery grant of more than £500,000 to Sir John Soane's Museum, one of the unsung gems of London.

The second anniversary of the National Lottery was also marked by an award of £1.4m towards the purchase by the Woodland Trust of a 10,000-acre Highland estate.

The second largest-ever land acquisition aided by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the grant for Glen Finglas in Perthshire, will enable the creation of Scotland's largest broad-leaved forest and guarantee public access. The estate stretches from the shore of

Loch Venachar to the 2,883ft (879m) summit of Ben Ledi.

Taking the anniversary total to more than £2m, there were also HLF grants of £42,700 to the Yorkshire Museum for the purchase of a rare collection of 289 mineral specimens and £108,000 towards the repair of Skenfrith Parish Hall in Gwent. Built in 1843 as a National School, the hall is now the focal point for a population of just 50 villagers.

Lauding the lottery at a press launch in the former home of the architect Sir John Soane in the City of London, Virginia Bottomley, the Secretary of State for National Heritage, stressed the importance of investing in museums and galleries at times of rapid change in technology and society.

"There is a sense of turbulence and insecurity," Mrs Bot-

tomley said. "That is why there is an ever greater desire to understand our roots, to actually stop and stare and wonder and learn."

There is little sense of turbulence at the museum, which was visited by 76,000 people last year. Sir John stipulated that numbers 12 and 13 on Lincoln's Inn Fields, houses he designed and turned into a museum himself, should be left "as nearly as possible" in the state in which he left them on his death in 1837.

The collection includes two famous series of pictures by William Hogarth - *The Rake's Progress* and *The Election* - and an alabaster sarcophagus discovered in the tomb chamber of Seti I, King of Egypt in 1300BC.

The £533,816 lottery grant has enabled the Sir John Soane's Museum Society to buy the house he built in 1823 next

door to his museum. Together, the three buildings form a fine symmetrical composition on the north side of the fields.

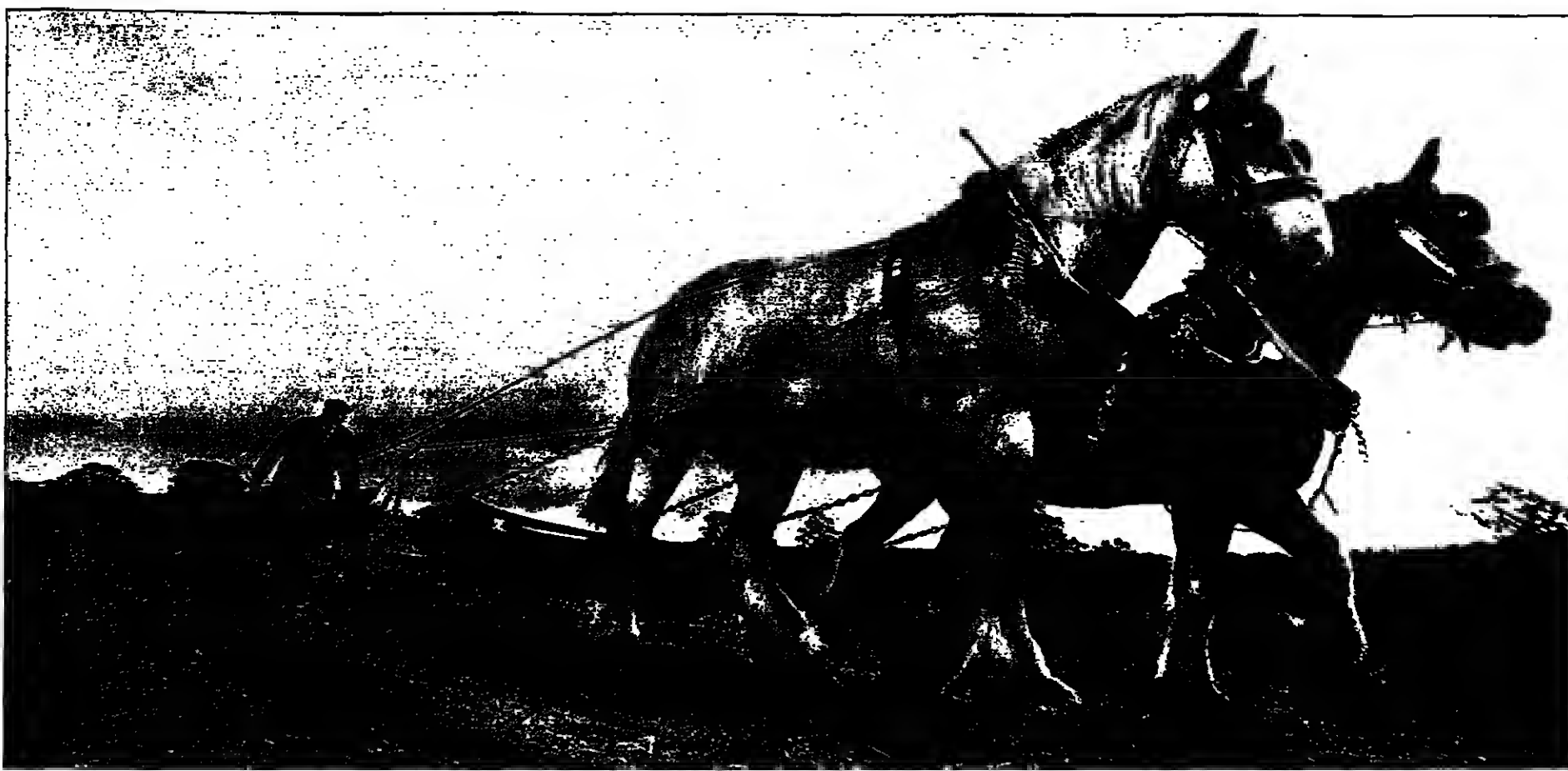
No 14 has never been opened to the public and is the only one of the many London town houses designed by Sir John with its interiors substantially intact. The present tenants, a firm of solicitors, can admire the ceiling mouldings but might regret the lack of lift in the Grade I listed building.

The extra space will enable the museum to display parts of the collection never seen before and provide educational facilities. In particular, there will be a proper study centre for 9,000 Adam drawings. Stored in 57 bound volumes in a large former wardrobe, the collection ranges from light sketches to coloured designs for chimney pieces and ceilings.

سكاي سات الاصل

صكزا من الامم

Funds no longer on ice for skate sta



Furrowed ground: Shire horses from Bradford Industrial Museum preparing for a series of ploughing exhibitions at Harewood House, Leeds, starting on Sunday. Photograph: Asadour Guzelian

Supermodel firm stays in the elite

The modelling agency representing Naomi Campbell, Claudia Schiffer and Linda Evangelista yesterday won an injunction to prevent the use of its name by another firm alleged to have enticed would-be teenage models into "glamour" auditions in pubs and skittle alleys.

Elite & Premier Ltd, which has a string of supermodels on its books, was granted a temporary High Court order banning the newly-founded Elite Modelling Agency Ltd from trading under the "Elite" name pending a further court hearing.

The well-established company, founded in 1991, argued a connection with its namesake would damage its reputation and result in loss of trade.

Justice Turner, representing Elite & Premier Ltd, told the High Court his clients "were the owners of a goodwill in that name".

Outlining his client's case for an injunction, Mr Turner told Mr Justice Harman of the agency's reputation.

"The agency represents many models who are household names such as Claudia Schiffer, Naomi Campbell and Linda Evangelista."

He then asked the judge: "who is renowned for once asking 'Who is Giza?'" and inquiring about Britpop band Oasis - "I don't know if your Lordship is familiar with these models?"

"Do I need to be?" replied the judge.

"I don't think so," said Mr Turner.

In discussing glamour modelling, the judge also queried the use of the word "topless".

"It means precisely the opposite," he was told.

The judge said the word was "remarkable - as if they had been cut off at the waist which is exactly what they do not mean".

"If you cut the top off it wouldn't be very interesting - what's more they would be dead. It's clearly an abuse of language by the tabloids," he said.

Tax chief 'arranged night with prostitute'

Graham Ball

An Inland Revenue official told an Old Bailey court yesterday that his boss had arranged for him to have a night out with a prostitute. He had slept with her but they had not had intercourse, he said.

Christopher Furze was giving evidence in the trial of his former colleague Michael Allcock, the tax inspector accused of accepting bribes worth more than £150,000.

Both worked at the Inland Revenue's Special Office, in an elite squad charged with reclaiming tax from wealthy foreign businessmen.

Mr Furze, who is married, said Allcock had organised a blind date for him in late 1989. Mr John Black, for the prosecution, asked him if he had any prior knowledge of what the night out was going to entail.

Mr Furze, now based in Witham, Essex, replied: "Not really, he just said, 'Leave it to me.'"

A partner was found for Mr Furze by Michelle Corrigan, a call girl and Allcock's lover. He and Allcock had gone to a hotel in north London where they met Ms Corrigan. "We later met a friend of Michelle Corrigan's called Karen I believe, and we had an evening out."

They returned to the hotel and he spent a night with "Karen". Asked if he handed over any money, he replied: "The following morning she informed that some payment was due and I said I had no idea about payments and referred her to Michael Allcock."

Mr Anthony Arledge, for the defence, asked Mr Furze, "Did you have sexual intercourse with Karen?" to which he replied, "No." He agreed that they had been in the same bed.

Earlier he had told the jury how he had lied under instruction from Allcock to mislead senior Inland Revenue managers.

He explained how he had been seconded to work with Allcock on the case of Amarwen Kalo, a multi-millionaire Lebanese, who once invested £1.5m in the Highland Spring mineral water business. The court has already heard that in July last year all charges against Mr Kalo were dropped.

In February 1989 two tax inspectors held a meeting in the Knightsbridge office of Mr Kalo's accountants. At that meeting he claimed it was agreed that the businessman should pay £50,000 in settlement for his outstanding tax bill. But according to Mr Furze, Allcock instructed him to leave out any mention of the proposed settlement from the case notes.

He further alleged that Allcock told him to lie in a letter to Inland Revenue superiors by claiming that a settlement could only be agreed on neutral territory. Allcock had suggested a meeting in the south of France though the matter had been settled in London.

Mr Furze said they stayed at the exclusive Negresco Hotel and on their second night on the Riviera were each given gambling chips by Mr Kalo, which they spent at the Monte Carlo casino. Mr Furze won £200 but Mr Allcock lost. Later Mr Furze and his wife accepted an offer to stay in Mr Kalo's holiday villa in Majorca.

Allcock denies bribery and corruption. Also charged with him are Hisham Alwan, an oil dealer from Knightsbridge, and David Shamoon, a property developer from west Kensington, who deny all charges. The trial continues.

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Girls, 13, kicked victim to death

Two girls yesterday admitted kicking to death a girl of 13 after a street fight.

The two, both now 13, admitted the manslaughter of Louise Allen. They had been charged with murder but the prosecution accepted their plea.

Mr Justice Hadden adjourned the case at Nottingham Crown Court for sentencing when evidence will be heard.

Richard Latham, QC, for the prosecution, said a fight started between one of the defendants, who was then 12, and another girl near a fairground in Corby, Northamptonshire, in April. The 12-year-old ended up astride the other girl and at this point Louise Allen, he said, pulled the 12-year-old away. The 13-year-old defendant then intervened.

He said: "It was during the next few seconds, and I use that timing advisedly, something between probably between 30 and 120 seconds, that Louise Allen received injuries to her head which led to her death."

He added: "The evidence of

the witness statements suggests that the first defendant [the 13-year-old] kicked Louise Allen to the head and thereafter the second defendant did likewise."

He said: "There is no doubt that the defendants knew that what they were doing was wrong. It is acknowledged by each of them in interview. There is evidence to suggest they had fought before. But that in itself is a long way from proof of the specific intent required for murder. In particular knowledge of the consequence of such a kick in the mind of an adult cannot be assumed in the case of a child." He said the prosecution, having consulted the Crown Prosecution Service and Louise's parents, had decided it would be improper to pursue a murder charge.

Sally Bennett-Jenkins, representing the 13-year-old, said her client went to the help of a friend who was involved in a fight "who she perceived was being outnumbered two to one by both the other girl and the intervention of Louise Allen".



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news

The day a chat with Arthur Scargill set Sue Lawley's heart aflutter



Sue Lawley: Microphone hidden in cleavage picked up the thumping of her heart

...and other TV foibles of the famous



Arthur Scargill: Had a strange effect on interviewer Sue Lawley



Sir John Betjeman: Ditched filming in fury, and went to play golf



Della Smith: Viewers ask advice on recipes, and stove technology



Kenneth Clark: Inability to memorise scripts led to autocue genre



Sir Richard Dimbleby: Spent hours secreting notes around studio



Desmond Lynam: Has little respect for broadcasters' talents

David Lister
Arts News Editor

The perils of Sue Lawley placing a microphone in her cleavage and the difficulty of getting the poet laureate presenter of *Mermaid* to find his way out of a Tube station are revealed by a BBC executive tomorrow.

Will Wyatt, chief executive of BBC Broadcast and formerly managing director of BBC Network Television, devotes his lecture to "television presenters and their audiences". While he is lavish in his praise of the BBC's best-known names, he reveals some moments they might have preferred forgotten.

Chief among these is the interview Sue Lawley carried out with the miners' leader Arthur Scargill live on the *Six O'Clock News* at the peak of the miners' strike. "She had the mike attached somewhere near her cleavage," Mr Wyatt says. "The sound man came to her thinking there was something wrong with her equipment - there was a strange battering sound. It turned out to be her heart beating at 160 to the minute - twice the normal speed."

Sue Lawley's heart may have thumped at the prospect of facing Arthur Scargill. Producers would quail at the prospect of working with the late poet laureate, Sir John Betjeman. Mr Wyatt reveals that when working on the famous documentary *Mermaid*, Betjeman had difficulties with the metro itself. He and his researcher planned to meet at a Tube station, but had not realised they could have more than one exit and each waited for more than half an hour before discovering each other.

When he was finally brought to the golf course where they were to film, Betjeman was in a foul temper, saying: "Oh, don't worry about me, I know I'm only the artist and I'm the least important." And he went off and played golf.

Mr Wyatt remembers as a personal disaster a talk show he helped to produce called *Friday Night, Saturday Morning*. It was thought a coup to get Harold Wilson, shortly after he had resigned as Prime Minister, to chair it. "He had chaired the Cabinet," Mr Wyatt says. "You would think that he could chair

a television show. Well, he couldn't and we should have known that, to save him, and ourselves, the agony."

The guests included fast bowler Freddie Trueman and Tony Benn. After five minutes, I realised that this was the first time I had seen such terror in the eyes of interviewees. Terror, not that they would be asked something they could not answer, but that they would never be asked anything at all."

Looking back on one of the seminal documentary series in television history, *Civilisation* with Kenneth Clark, Mr Wyatt recalls that Clark could not memorise scripts and wanted to do the series from behind a desk. His producer, Michael Gill, coaxed him out on the road by taking with them an autocue and a new genre was born.

The greatest presenters had habits which they stuck to religiously. The late Sir Richard Dimbleby stayed behind in a darkened studio sticking bits of paper below camera lenses for the next day's programme - notes of names, facts and figures. He also used his cuffs.

Mr Wyatt reveals too what viewers write in to ask presenters. Della Smith is asked not just about cooking, but how to fix viewers' stoves. Barry Norman is asked not just about films but about people's local cinemas.

Ironically, in view of the fact that so many of the BBC 60th anniversary awards went to contemporary figures, Mr Wyatt, who is said to have encouraged this, devotes nearly all of the praise in his lecture to the great presenters of the past.

However, he does quote an adage from one current star presenter, Desmond Lynam, who said: "If you're a sporting star, you're a sporting star. If you don't quite make it, then you become a coach. If you can't coach, you become a journalist. If you can't spell, you become a broadcaster."

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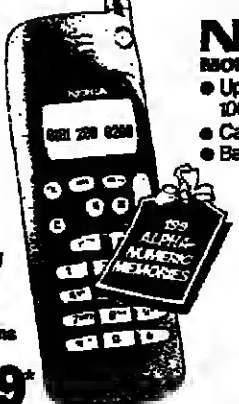
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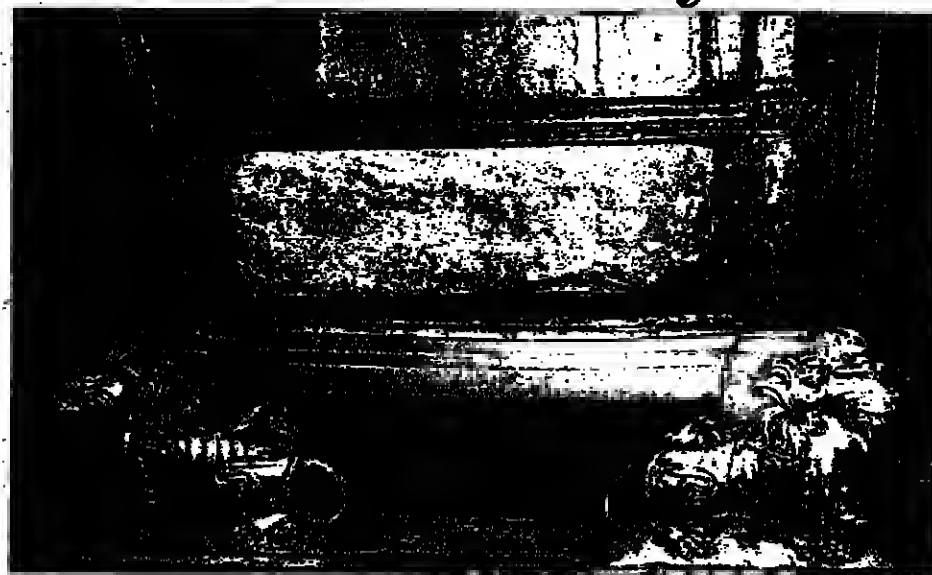
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Low profile for the Stone of Destiny as it takes the high road north



Rocking the vote: The stone leaves the abbey where it was kept beneath the Coronation Chair, centre, and, right, its return after being taken by nationalists

Photographs: PA

James Cusick

Hollywood would have at least ordered up a tartan blanket. Maybe over-dubbed the pibroch tones of a lone piper. But yesterday Her Majesty's Government merely stuffed the Stone of Destiny into the back of a Range Rover and sent it north.

The Stone of Scone, which, apart from a kidnapping fiasco in 1950, had lain under the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey for 700 years, was beginning a 400-mile journey that will see it come to rest in Edinburgh Castle. The public will be able to see it from St Andrew's Day, 30

November, for a mere £5.50. As the central plank, nay cornerstone, of John Major's charm offensive towards the Scots in the run-up to next year's general election, the stone appears to have been endowed with official mystical properties. The Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Forsyth, and his his-

torical advisers persuaded Downing Street that its cultural power and symbolism were worth more than its 336lb in priceless public relations. Yesterday morning the piece of rock over which every English monarch has been crowned since 1308 was wheeled from beneath the oak of the Caro-

nation Chair. As Big Ben was struck for the seventh time, police, officers from the Coldstream Guards, heritage experts from Scotland and the Dean and members of Westminster Abbey surveyed the rail-gate loading of the stone, which was encased in a simple steel box. Around 10am today, having

travelled via the Coldstream Bridge on the border, the stone will come home. It will head back south at the next coronation, however. As one Scottish Heritage expert put it: "On the journey back I think everyone from Mystic Meg to the Royal Corgis will be expected to line the M1 and wave."

Student died from rare lung ailment

Charlie Bain

An Oxford student who was believed to have died from an adult form of cot death in fact died from a rare lung disorder, an inquest heard yesterday.

Rachel Steer, 18, a first year classics student at St Hilda's College, who was described as "wonderfully bright and cheerful", was found dead in bed at her college four weeks ago after she failed to turn up to an early-morning tutorial. A post-mortem examination on her body proved inconclusive and baffled doctors, who indicated that Steer may have died from Sudden Adult Death Syndrome (SADS), a rare form of cot death.

But yesterday Sanjiv Maner, a pathologist from the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, said that Steer died of acute cardiac failure with pulmonary oedema, a condition in which blood clots on the lung prevent oxygen from reaching the heart, hindering respiration and causing instant death.

Although the condition is common among young girls on the Pill and normally associated with old people, it was "extremely rare" in this case, as Steer was taking no contraception, Dr Maner said.

He added that there was no evidence of drug abuse, tran-

quillisers or paracetamol on her body and the amount of alcohol she had consumed that evening was "not significant" in her death.

Steer, from Surbiton, Surrey, had gone dancing with a friend at nearby St Edmund's Hall and had drunk two bottles of beer before returning to her room at St Hilda's around midnight on Saturday 19 October.

Staff at the college were alerted on the following Monday morning after she failed to turn up for a 9am Greek tutorial.

She was found dead in her bed and there were no signs of disturbances in her room, which had been locked from the inside.

Steer, who had been at Oxford less than two weeks, had wanted to become a barrister. At Tiffin Girls' School, Kingston upon Thames, she had been regarded as an extremely talented student, destined for an outstanding career.

Her parents, Clifford and Christina, were not present at the inquest which took place at Oxford Coroner's Court.

Recording a verdict of death by natural causes, the Oxford Coroner, Nicholas Gardiner, said that Steer died of a rare disorder.

"It is nothing we can take any particular precautions against,"

DAILY POEM

Epitaph on Himself

By John Donne

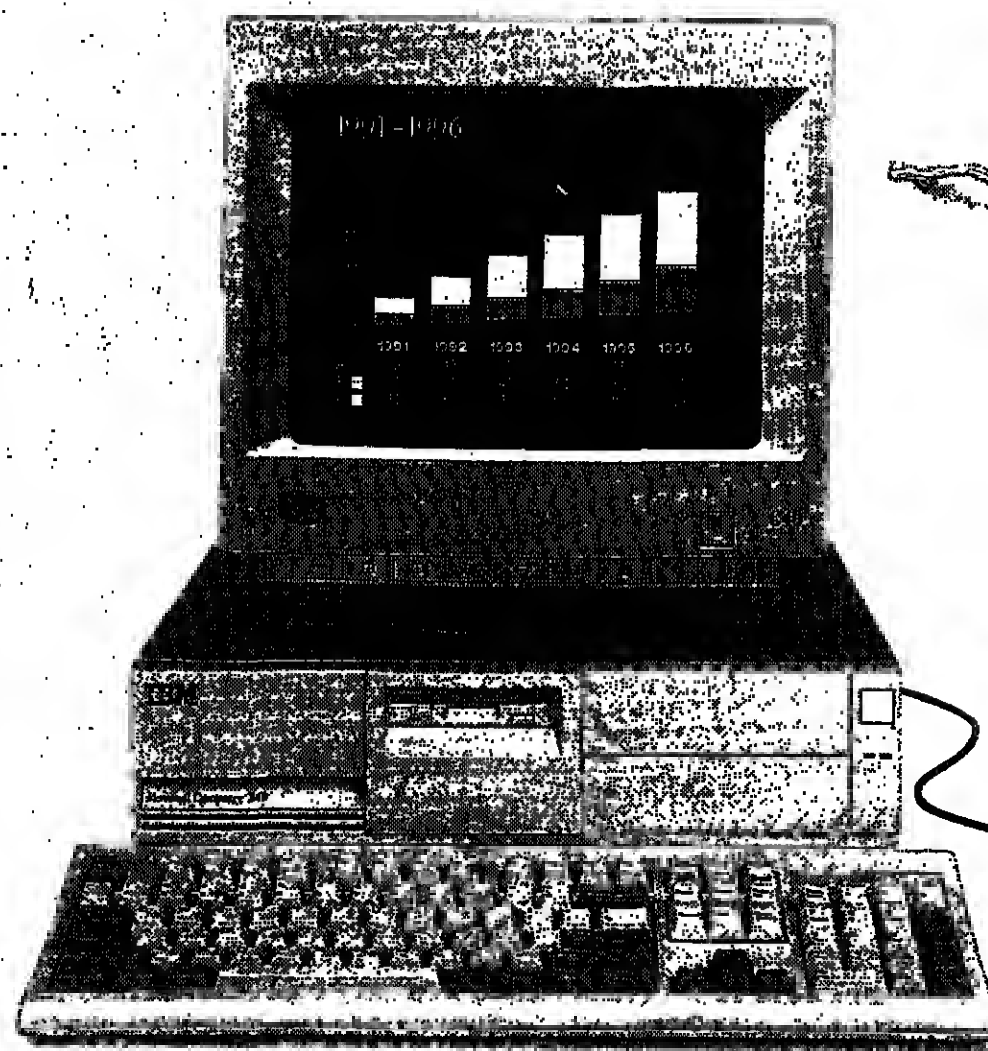
My fortune and my choice this custom break,
When we are speechless grown, to make stones speak.
Though no stone tell thee what I was, yet though
In my grave's bristled seas what thou art now:
Yes thou art not yet so good, all death us lay
To ripe and mellow here, we are stubborn clay.
Parents make us earth, and souls dignify
Us to be glass; here to grow gold we lie.
Whilst in our souls sin bred and pampered is,
Our souls become worm-eaten carcasses;
So we ourselves miserably destroy.
Here bodies with less trouble enjoy
Such privilege, enabled here to scale
Heaven, and men's whisper's air shall them exhale.
Hear this, and mend thyself, and thou mend'st me,
By making me being dead, do good to thee.
And think me well composed, that I could now
A last-stick hour to syllables allow.

John Donne was born in 1572 in Broad Street, London. He was a Catholic at a time when Catholics were terribly persecuted and lost his father at the age of four, circumstances which helped to set up complex psychological patterns within him. In adult life this complexity yielded his miraculous poetry although his friend, Ben Jonson, feared his verse would prove too difficult to survive. Poverty, secrecy, suicidal depression, a powerful drive for self-advancement and finally, when all other employment eluded him, entry at James I's behest into the Church, formed the thread of Donne's life. The most celebrated preacher of his day, but little known as a poet, he died in 1631.

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politics

Brown sees cracks in 'economic miracle'

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Chancellor Kenneth Clarke was given a clear warning yesterday by Gordon Brown, his Labour shadow, that the rise in interest rates would curtail the room for tax cuts in his Budget.

Mr Brown said the rise in inflation would hit home owners, and underlined the need for a prudent Budget on 26 November. He said it showed that

cracks were already appearing in John Major's "economic miracle".

The Prime Minister clashed angrily with Tony Blair in the Commons, accusing the Labour leader of pursuing "grievance politics" as he drove home Labour's pre-Budget charge - repeated in a party political broadcast - that the voters would not trust the Tories on tax.

Mr Major told him: "What you cannot stomach is that the

British economy is in better shape than any Labour government has ever been able to put it." The Prime Minister said the rise in inflation from 2.1 per cent to 2.7 per cent was "a statistical aberration". But Mr Blair dismissed this as "ridiculous".

The rise in inflation reinforces a pre-Budget poster campaign by Labour attacking 22 tax increases since the 1992 general election. It is being backed up with a party political broad-

cast, modelled on a horror film. Calling for urgent action to tackle the lack of investment which was the underlying cause of price rises, Mr Brown said: "Two weeks ago, we had an interest rates rise. At the beginning of this week, mortgages started to rise again. Now we have the largest rise in inflation for six years."

Within only two months of the Prime Minister declaring an economic miracle, the cracks

are already appearing, exposing the underlying economic weakness of the Tory economic record. It makes a mockery of the Prime Minister's claim to have conquered inflation.

Mr Brown said the interest rates rise two weeks ago was "necessary and inevitable", and it was now important to take action to deal with inflation. "We are demanding that we have a prudent and sensible Budget,"

Committing Labour to reverse any move to abolish capital gains tax, Mr Brown said it would open the door to tax avoidance which would cost more than £3.5bn, estimated by the Treasury.

Ministers privately welcomed the upturn in the economy, in spite of the inflation, but feared the Chancellor will be forced to raise interest rates again, flattening the lift it is giving the Tories in the opinion polls.

Welcoming this week's 40,800

fall in the jobless figures, the Prime Minister told the House: "Unemployment here is falling in a way that cannot be seen anywhere else in the continent of Europe."

"I don't think that is unrelated to the fact that we have avoided the burdens on business that so many of our partners have accepted and that would have been accepted by Labour."

Mr Blair countered: "Today's inflation rise, together

with the sharp rise in long-term interest rates, should set the warning lights flashing. And he asked the Prime Minister: "How do you square it with your promise, made just a few months ago, that you would meet your inflation target by the end of this year?"

Mr Major retorted: "I know the retail price figures are complex to understand, but I think you have failed to understand the impact of the figures."

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS

SCORING THE EXCHANGES

John Major
5/10



Used the 'patronising schoolmaster' method of debate to amusing effect, but the economy is far too broad a topic for either side's questions. Some of his assertions (that inflation never fell below 7.5 per cent under Labour, for example) were also wrong.

Tony Blair
6/10

Blair was able to send up both the style and the substance of what Major said. At one point he put on his special debating society voice to declare "I really don't think we've ever heard a more ridiculous excuse than that for a rise in interest rate figures".

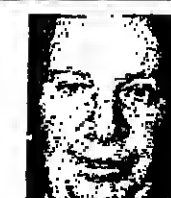
THEMES OF THE DAY

The economy (Sidney Chapman, C. Chipping Barnet; Tony Blair, Paddy Ashdown)
The Social Chapter (Hartley Booth, C. Finchley)
BSE (Peter Pike, Lab. Burnley)
The Crisis in Zaire (Andrew Rowe, C. Mid Kent)

BLAIR'S ATTACK

Blair chose to discuss the state of the economy focusing on "today's inflation rise, together with the sharp rise in long-term interest rates". Major responded to his questions with a mixture of commiseration for Blair's supposed inability to understand the statistics ("I will explain it to the Rt Hon Gentleman, so he can explain it to his backbenchers"), and emphasis of the good employment figures of Wednesday. Major may come to regret his explanation of the inflation rise ("a statistical aberration because of a dramatic fall last year").

GOOD DAY BAD DAY



PETER PIKE
(Lab. Burnley) skewering the Prime Minister over beef once again. Major said he had already answered the question several times on previous occasions. All he could offer was the prospect of continuing discussions with the European Commission.



BETTY BOOTHROYD
The Speaker allowed the miming and catcalling from the Conservative benches to go on for too long before intervening. Blair had to put up with a lot of waving and gibbering before the Speaker decided to call a halt.

THE QUIP OF THE DAY

Major ended his reply to Ashdown with a fine new Majorism. "I suggest he stops taking advice from his advisers who clearly know nothing... about everything!"

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

Blair: "Will he now confirm that on interest rates and inflation Britain is now 11th out of 15 in Europe? Will he confirm it?" Major wouldn't, asserting once more that Blair "really doesn't understand". Blair gave him another chance in his third question: "If he disputes it, let him come to the dispatch box and say that that figure is wrong". Major didn't.

THE CREEP OF THE DAY

Chapman: "Would my Rt Hon Friend accept that the drop of over forty thousand in the latest monthly unemployment count... underlines yet again the success of the government's policies promoting job creation..." He went on for a long while in the same vein.

Compiled by Ben Summers



Dunblane group: From left, Tony Hill, Rosemary Hunter, Les Morton, Martyn Dunn, Ann Pearson, John Crozier Photograph: Philip Meech

Dunblane parents meet with Major

James Cusick

John Major last night met parents of the victims of the Dunblane tragedy - just days before the Commons vote on handgun bans.

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, arranged to see the parents at the House of Commons yesterday morning in advance of the Prime Minister's meeting and pledged not to use the tragedy as a political issue if John Major allowed a free vote on a total handgun ban. The Prime Minister immediately ruled that out, telling the Commons at question time that firearms legislation was not traditionally considered a matter for a free vote.

But even before Mr Major's statement the Dunblane parents said they held out little hope of persuading him to change his mind. Les Morton, father of one of the victims of the massacre last March in which 16 children and a teacher died admitted before the meeting that "there was very little chance, if any at all" of this.

Mr Major's meeting at the Commons with the Dunblane group, including John Crozier, Martyn Dunn and the Snowdrop campaign founders Ann Pearson and Rosemary Hunter, lasted nearly 40 minutes.

Denied their calls for a free vote the Dunblane parents and Snowdrop campaigners will seek other avenues of influence. One route is direct entry into the House of Commons itself. Mr Crozier has still not ruled out the possibility that he will stand in Stirling against the Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Forsyth, at the next general election. Mr Crozier said in a BBC Radio Scotland interview that "drastic action" was now needed. Even if he did not win the seat, Mr Forsyth's thin majority would certainly be at risk from a highly emotive campaign.

Underclass sinking further

John Rentfoll
Political Correspondent

The poorest tenth of the population are now 13 per cent worse off than the poorest tenth when the Conservatives came to power in 1979, according to Government statistics published yesterday.

The figures have been a political battleground since the early years of Margaret Thatcher's government. This year, David Mitchell, the social security minister, sought to blunt the impact of the figures by publishing the findings of new research showing that about half of those in the bot-

tom tenth in 1991 had moved up the income scale three years later.

Ministers have previously suggested that, because the individuals who make up the poorest tenth are not the same ones from year to year, the misery of poverty is spread around. But the first evidence of "income mobility" failed to support this argument conclusively.

The figures confirmed that pensioners and lone parents at the bottom of the pile tend to be stuck there, according to Paul Johnson of the Institute for Fiscal Studies. "Single young people do move in and out, but they don't tend to climb out very far,

usually only to the next groups up. They don't tend to climb to the top," he said.

The figures undermine the Prime Minister's rhetoric, repeated at the Tory conference in Bournemouth last month, about giving people at any level of society the opportunity to reach the top.

The data for the period from 1979 to 1993/94 show that the median income for the poorest tenth fell by 13 per cent after housing costs, and taking inflation into account.

This represented a small recovery from the previous year, when it had fallen by 17 per cent, partly because of unem-

ployed people falling into arrears on their mortgages.

The median income of the richest tenth rose over the same period by 65 per cent.

Mr Johnson supported the government's argument that the estimates for the very poorest are "particularly uncertain".

He said: "There are genuinely a lot of problems with that group." But, he said, the fact that the income of the poorest tenth has not gone up at all in real terms, when the rest has gone up by about half, is "pretty dramatic".

Households Below Average Income, 1979-1993/94, Stationery Office, £30.

State pension under threat says Harman

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Harriet Harman last night claimed the Tories could scrap the state pension after the disclosure of plans to require pensioners to take out private "top up" schemes.

"The writing is on the wall for the state pension," Labour's shadow social security secretary said after reports that the Downing Street policy unit was working an election manifesto plan to require people to take out private pensions to replace State Earnings Related Pensions (Serps).

The Government said the reports were "speculative" but support for the total privatisation of state pensions came from the Tory Bow Group in a policy paper by Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, Tory MP for Cirencester and Tewkesbury. He said the current state pension was a poor investment and investing two thirds of national insurance contributions in a private fund could deliver £280 a week.

Alistair Darling, a Labour Treasury spokesman, said 500,000 people had been misled private pensions after a Government drive to switch people from Serps. "People will be deeply suspicious of a Government with such an appalling record actively encouraging people in to it again," he said.

Figures yesterday released by the Department of Social Security showed that the bad publicity could be hitting the schemes. About 5.56 million people had personal pensions in 1994-5 but that was a fall of 100,000 on the previous year.

But in her first major speech since taking over the social security portfolio in the summer, Ms Harman yesterday stated Labour's commitment to renew the welfare state. She said the welfare state must be ahead of economic and social change, not lagging behind.

On pensions, she committed Labour to introducing a "flexible decade" of retirement, in which people could take reduced state pensions, if they wanted to retire early.

"Labour believes with a flexible decade of retirement the state pension could give significantly more choice about when they retire. It would make a significant contribution towards giving people more choice and fit in with today's lifestyles and work patterns," Ms Harman said.

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Strikes scare off French bank sale

Mary Dejevsky
Paris

The French government has halted the privatisation of the banking group CIC in a decision that appears to have more to do with politics than economics.

With popular discontent running high over unemployment, state budgetary constraints and the Prime Minister personally, the government's priority is to avoid a resurgence of last year's near-revolutionary street protests.

The official reason given for calling off the privatisation was that only one serious offer had been received and that was considered too low. But the timing of the announcement - on the eve of a public-sector strike that is expected to halt most local transport - suggests that the economic argument was not uppermost.

The privatisation of CIC had encountered strong opposition from bank employees, and from politicians who predicted the end of regional banking in France.

The next few weeks will be a sensitive time for the French government, and for the Prime Minister, Alain Juppé.

It was a year ago today that he presented to Parliament his plan for a comprehensive reform of the welfare and public service pension system, precipitating a six-week movement of popular protest.

The period between now and Christmas will be punctuated by a series of anniversaries of last year's "glorious protests" and the ever-present risk of a recurrence.

This is not the first time in recent months that the government has shown extreme caution when confronted with any incipient protests that could assume national proportions.

Three weeks ago, a plan to restructure the state railway company was quickly shelved. A short announcement on the day the bill had been due for publication said only that it had been postponed.

The bill had been expected to set out a completely reworked and greatly diluted version of last year's planned reform of the railways. Even this, it seems, was considered too risky. The railwaymen, with their pension and job worries, had spearheaded last year's protests, shutting down the national network for four weeks.

The government is also smarting from the outcry that met its decision to sell off the state-owned electronics and communications company, Thomson. The protest was threefold: That such a giant of the French state sector should be sold off at all; that a company which most French people thought was flourishing (even though it made huge losses) should be sold for the symbolic sum of one franc; and that the winning bid should include the further sale of a Thomson subsidiary - Thomson Multimedia - to a foreign company, Daewoo of South Korea.

The public relations fiasco of the Thomson sell-off, which unleashed all France's pent-up anxiety about jobs leaving the state sector, state assets going to foreigners and the state of France in general, is likely to have been a big factor in yesterday's decision to delay the sale of CIC.

Whether it will forestall job losses at the ailing bank, or forestall a predicted shake-up in the precarious French banking sector generally, is another matter.

Like the retreat on the railways, the decision may only have been postponed until a less sensitive time of year. Stand by for the spring.



Lesson in power: Police grappling with a protesting student in Madrid yesterday during demonstrations against cuts in Spain's education budget. There were demonstrations across the nation. Photograph: Reuters

Industrialist's son held by Eta kidnappers

Elizabeth Nash
Madrid

Crisis returned to the Spanish Basque country yesterday after the son of a prominent industrialist was kidnapped, apparently by the separatist organisation Eta.

The action follows a renewed Eta campaign to extort "revolutionary taxes" from the region's industrialists.

Cosme Delclaux, 34, son of a prosperous glass-making family linked to a powerful Basque bank, disappeared last Monday in Las Arenas near Bilbao. His car was found near his workplace two days later. Police believe Eta will demand a huge ransom and use the crime to frighten other Basque entrepreneurs.

Extortion of "revolutionary taxes" is Eta's favoured method of raising funds for its fight for an independent Basque homeland, and this is the third such campaign in a year. Some 50 businessmen and professionals have received threatening letters in the past month, demanding up to £30,000 for the "liberation process" and offering to accept payment in instalments.

The Interior Minister, Jaime Mayor Oreja, admitted the recent lull in Eta activity was no more than "a mirage". Police think the latest action indicates

the recomposition of an Eta strike force.

The government has appealed for recipients not to yield to threatening letters but to tell the police, but many will be too frightened to do so. A businessman's leader said the kidnapping "worsened an already intolerable situation" by heightening the climate of fear and threatening to derail measures to bolster the region's flagging industrial activity.

Eta already holds hostage Jose Antonio Ortega Lara, a prison officer seized more than 10 months ago. Last April Eta released the businessman Jose Maria Aldaya, reportedly on payment of more than £500,000, after nearly a year.

The latest action has ended cautious moves to bring nearer home some of the 540 Eta prisoners held throughout Spain, meeting one of Eta's principal demands. That process was the fruit of talks between democratic Basque nationalists and the interior ministry. Basque leaders do not deny the existence of contacts with people close to Eta, and all parties see the need for political as well as policing measures to end the guerrilla war.

If confirmed as an Eta operation, the kidnapping marks the 76th in a campaign that has claimed more than 800 lives in 30 years.

US will send troops to new Bosnia force

Mary Dejevsky
Paris

The United States confirmed yesterday that it would provide up to one-third of a follow-on Nato force in Bosnia.

The decision, which had been expected, sets the seal on a new force of some kind for Bosnia for the coming year. It came as the nations involved in Bosnia met in Paris to examine other aspects of the former Yugoslavia.

The new multinational follow-on force will replace the present 60,000-member Implementation Force (Ifor). Nato peacekeepers, including about

15,000 US troops, are set to pull out by the end of the year.

Nato's Secretary-General said in Washington that the overall force would come from about 30 countries and be as large as 30,000 troops. His "best guess", he said, is that there will be 6,000 to 10,000 Americans.

"I can't guarantee it, but that's my feeling," Javier Solana said, after meeting with US officials, including Vice President Al Gore.

The decision will create some continuity in Bosnia, underlined by the conference in Paris. It agreed that the authority and powers of Carl Bildt, the in-

ternational community's High Representative to Bosnia, are to be increased and the post will be maintained for a further two years to oversee the transition to civilian government and a durable peace in Bosnia.

France, as host of yesterday's Bosnia meeting, was concerned to keep official proceedings on course and set the guiding principles for the two-year "consolidation period" in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Among them is a 13-point set of priorities governing weapons control and reduction, the formation of a civilian police force, human rights guarantees, freedom of movement, the safe re-

turn of refugees and "full co-operation" with the International War Crimes Tribunal.

While all participants stressed the progress since last year, Mr Bildt and international representatives expressed "concern" that insufficient progress had been made in important areas.

They were particularly unhappy about the time being taken to form civil institutions in Bosnia, starting with a government.

In yesterday's "guidelines", the Bosnian presidency pledged "as a high priority to establish all the joint institutions provided for in the Constitution and make them fully operational as

soon as possible". The guidelines also included pointed reminders that provision of aid could depend on implementation of the peace agreement.

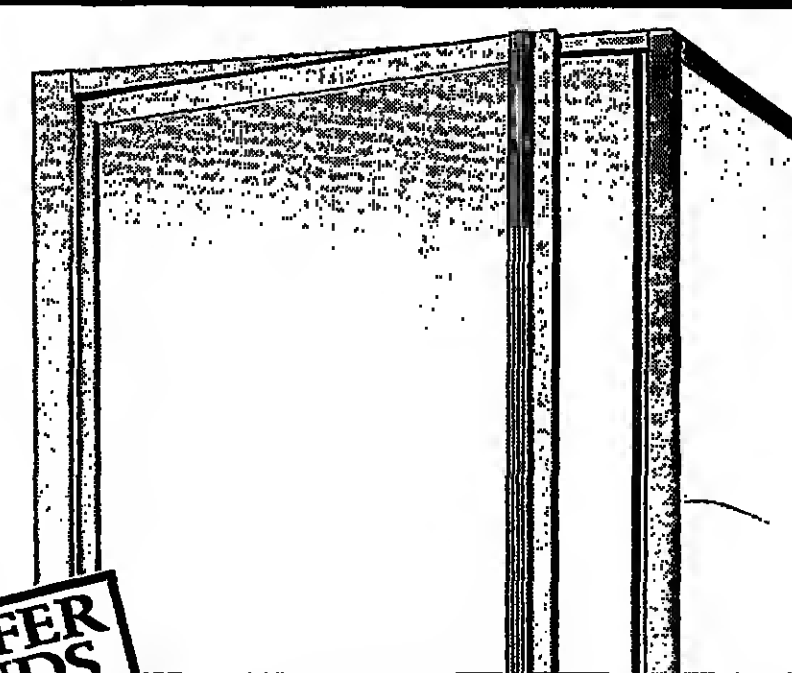
"There is a link," they said, "between the availability of international financial assistance and the degree to which all the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina fully implement the peace agreement, including co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal."

As High Representative, Mr Bildt is to have his role "reinforced", so that he "chains all" meetings with agencies working on the ground, he will be acknowledged as the "final

authority" where there are conflicts in interpreting aspects of the peace accord relating to civilian matters.

He will also have the authority to make "recommendations" to the Bosnian authorities. His staff is also likely to be increased. Whether Mr Bildt's 12-month mandate will be extended has not yet been discussed, but it appears to be likely.

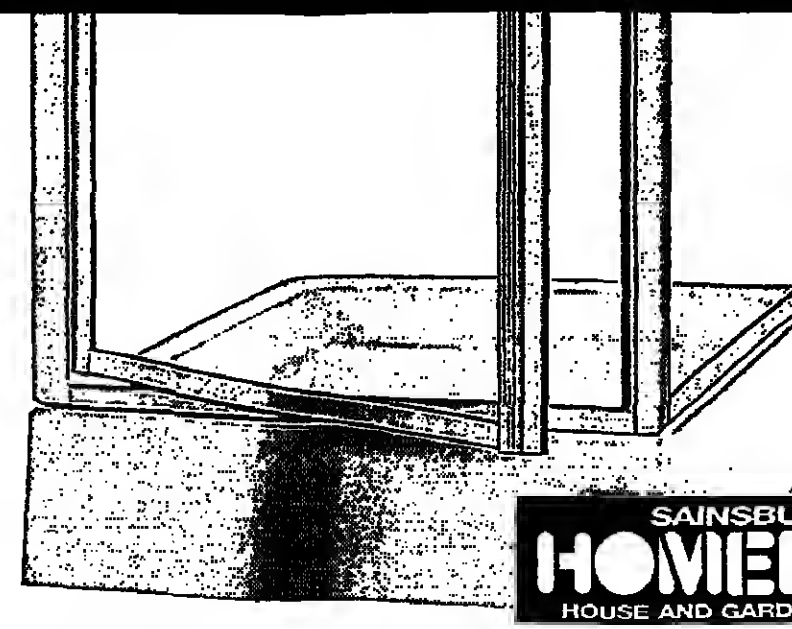
The meeting in Paris is to be followed by a conference in London in three weeks' time to consider how the principles agreed yesterday will be put into practice. It also agreed to hold municipal elections.



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international

The night a Florida town burned

Phil Davison
Miami

At least five people were wounded by gunfire as the Florida retirement town of St Petersburg erupted in rioting overnight Wednesday-Thursday for the second time in three weeks.

Groups of black youths roamed the streets, burning buildings and shooting at white policemen and motorists, after a white policeman was cleared of blame for shooting a black youth on 24 October. Police responded with tear gas.

After the verdict was announced, black youths shot a 39-year-old white policeman in the leg. Another officer flying a he-

licopter was grazed by a bullet and three civilians were also wounded. Bullets were fired at four small television station cameramen but none was reported hit.

The usually staid Gulf coast town across the bay from Tampa - where blacks form 20 per cent of the 240,000 population - was stunned by the latest violence in a predominantly black district south of the town centre.

Although the rioting was less widespread than on 24 October, when 11 people were hurt and 28 buildings torched, it appeared to involve more shooting and less rock-throwing.

Police and city officials blamed a radical black group known as the National People's

Democratic Uthuru Movement, which had warned that "the town is going to burn" if a jury acquitted white officer James Knight of killing Tyrone Lewis, 18, last month. The officer fired into Lewis's car after the youth refused to roll down his tinted

windows and allegedly edged the car forward towards the policeman.

Although the jury of 15 whites and one black ruled on Wednesday that the shooting was "justifiable homicide", a police investigation ruled that of-

ficer Knight should have retreated instead of shooting. He was suspended without pay for two months.

A local equal rights activist, Perkins Shelton, said: "All the officer had to do was step aside. Instead, he shot and killed that

boy. That shows how valueless black people's lives are in this community." Truman Smith, who raised Lewis, said: "To kill my son and then clear the officer is unthinkable."

After the jury verdict, the Uthuru movement - apparently

named after the Swahili word for "freedom" - distributed leaflets calling for a "community meeting" at 6.30pm on Wednesday. "We will not be shot down in the streets like dogs," it said. "Get organised!" The shooting erupted around 6.30pm.

St Petersburg's mayor, David Fischer, called early yesterday for tolerance but criticised Uthuru. Fearing that the riots may spread throughout Florida, governor Lawton Chiles said the state's National Guard was on alert.



Flashpoint: An armed police officer standing by as fire burns in a car lot during a night of disturbances in the Florida town of St Petersburg

Photograph: Reuters

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Archbishop who inspired nation in life and death

Rupert Cornwell
Washington

It was the most public of deaths - yet somehow Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago, suffused his own with a dignity, serenity and faith that made the last months of his life a national inspiration.

"Heaven's a little better place today," said one parishioner from the city's ethnic West Side when he heard of his death.

The highest-ranking figure in the US Catholic church died early yesterday at his home after an 18-month bout of pancreatic cancer. He underwent surgery in June 1995, but after an initial remission announced in August that the disease had spread and had become inoperable. A fortnight ago, he gave up his duties in the archdiocese.

Even so, the Cardinal remained active until the end in the great moral debates of his day - including a patient's right to assisted suicide, an issue now taken up by the US Supreme Court and which he opposed vehemently. "I am at the end of my earthly life," he wrote to the Court on 7 November, "and I know from my own experience that patients face difficult and deeply personal decisions about their care... but creating this new 'right' will endanger society and send a false signal that a less than 'perfect' life is not worth living."

The Archbishop died surrounded by his sister and friends, having received phone calls on the final day of his life from President Bill Clinton and the Pope, who thanked him "for everything he had done for the archdiocese of Chicago and



Cardinal Joseph Bernardin: Viewed death as a friend

the universal Church," according to a Vatican spokesman.

During 14 years as a cardinal, representing the 2.3 million Catholics in Chicago, perhaps his most valuable service was as a builder of consensus and compromise on issues which set liberal US Catholics at odds with Rome - among them birth control, women priests and Aids.

Moderate and quiet-spoken, the 68-year-old Cardinal commanded respect from all quarters of his church and beyond. Nothing, however, became him more than his handling of sexual molestation charges brought by former seminarian, Stephen Cook. Mr Cook, who died of Aids last year, recounted his story and was publicly forgiven by the Cardinal. Despite his embarrassment, he was stoic and serene throughout the ordeal.

Cardinal Bernardin had come to terms with mortality. "We can look at death in two ways, as an enemy or a friend," he said in September. "As a person of faith, I see death as a friend."

Swiss to discuss Nazi gold loot

Louise Jury

The Swiss government has invited Greville Janner MP to discuss the Nazi gold affair in Bern next week.

Mr Janner, chairman of the Holocaust Education Trust and vice-president of the World Jewish Congress, will demand an immediate contribution by the Swiss to Jewish charities working with Holocaust survivors as a "significant gesture to the victims of Nazism who are fast dying away". He will also press for speed and openness in investigating what happened to Nazi-looted wealth.

The meeting will be the first face-to-face opportunity for putting his case to Flavio Cotti, the Swiss foreign secretary, Thomas Borer, who is heading the inquiry, and Swiss members of parliament. Mr Janner, with David Hunt MP who chairs the Inter-Parliamentary Council Against Anti-Semitism, also hopes to meet bankers.

Switzerland has been embarrassed by the storm of controversy which followed allegations that at the end of the Second World War it held on to gold which it knew could not have been obtained by Germany legally. In September, the Swiss

government bowed to worldwide pressure and announced plans to lift the secrecy surrounding its banking business to help search for any such wealth left in its bank vaults.

Mr Janner said yesterday that next Monday's meeting was further evidence of movement in the Swiss position. "It is very significant," he said.

Robert Reich, attached at the Swiss embassy in London, said yesterday: "The meeting is to enable Mr Janner to present his queries and current preoccupations concerning the whole matter. From our side, we want to outline to him once again what has been undertaken and done in Switzerland."

Jewish campaigners have been pressing for action on the former Nazi wealth. Lawyers acting for the World Jewish Congress last week called on Britain, France and the United States to delay distribution of \$50bn of Nazi-looted gold held in the Bank of England until its origin was established. It is due to be returned to countries from which it was plundered during occupation. Jewish organisations claim some of it came from private persons and efforts should be made to trace them or their families.

مكتبة الامم المتحدة

Watch out, Labour: the Tories could still win

Gallup here, MORI there: support for the Tories ratchets up with each successive poll.

By themselves the polls might not be causing consternation in the Labour Party. You do not have to be much of an arithmetician to work out that the rate of attrition of Labour's lead is going to have to rise if the Tories are to break through by the time an election has to be held next spring. But we all tend to ignore the small print: polling reports generally banish the don't know or won't say to a footnote, even though together they equal or exceed Labour's lead. Besides, polls show opinion in a rear-view mirror. In a few weeks they are going to pick up what has been going on during the past few days – and when they do, they will make startling reading for anyone (the leadership of the Labour Party included) who has ruled the Tories out as election winners.

The change has been signalled recently by a loud noise – a sort of clunk-click. Two ends of a Tory political project came together. One is anti-Europe, neatly packaged in the European Court of Justice's decision on working hours. The other is economic competence, tagged yesterday by the latest unemployment figures, and bolstered by healthy signs on the housing and consumer confidence front. Put them together and it becomes plausible for the Conservatives to argue that

Britons should vote for the party which has a recipe for prosperity, and which will protect the ingredients from Luxembourg lawyers and their meddling like.

For a divided party it's a potent tonic. If Kenneth Clarke follows through with a prudent budget that does not charge off down the tax-cutting road, but instead chooses to emphasise sensible long-term economic management in everyone's interest, then the Tory claim to confidence and competence could become a powerful electoral mix, even in the very few months remaining. Cool Britannia, indeed. No wonder Tory tails are up.

It bears repeating: the key to election success is the perception of economic competence. The Tory plot is a neat one: first, to imply that our recent economic gains (relative to the rest of Europe) are a consequence of running a deregulated, liberalised market economy; and secondly that, in turn, the imposition of a 48-hour week is an obstruction to that economic success. Vote Labour, John Major will argue, and you will see our economic advantage sliced off at the neck by Eurocrats determined to level our economy down.

It is a neat plot, and it may yet work. But it is only one plot. Labour's trouble of late is that Mr Blair and his strategic team seem to be sunk in the torpor of their long-standing opinion-poll lead. Some shadow ministers have taken to

swanning around the political circuit as if they were merely killing time until the ministerial Rover draws up before their front door. Labour has turned itself into the passive party, sitting back while the unpopularity of the Tories does it for them – all the while striving to keep their noses clean and their feet clear of the potholes. All this is unimpressive, yes, but rational if the attitude surveys continue to suggest that this is still basically an election for the Tories to lose. But now the Tories have, for the first time in many, many months, a convincing battle plan that will also provide something of a formula for pre-election unity. Labour passivity will no longer do.

In spite of a good show by Robin Cook, Labour has let the Tories seize the initiative on working hours, Europe, and the economy. Some of the reasons for Labour's slow-footedness lie in the intellectual ambiguities of new Labour. The party is still uncertain about the role of government in economic life. It has found itself unable to say with any vigour, for example, that the state is a legitimate protector of workers' rights, that in an age when collective bargaining benefits the few, rather than the many, government has

a permanent duty to redress the inevitable imbalance between employer and employee, and that treating staff fairly is a positive attribute of economic modernism. But you do not need theoretical refinement to say – as even President Clinton can say – that the little person sometimes needs protection, in the form of minimum wages (a hot ticket for the Democrats) or state-regulated maximum hours.

Labour at present lacks the confidence to pitch for positive appeal. Its appeal (as yesterday) is essentially negative: "Enough is enough" is not a campaign slogan, it's an admission that Labour has nothing enterprising to say. Somehow, and soon, Labour has to detach the issue from Europe, and repatriate it as one of domestic fair shares.

Public opinion is not fixed, and on jobs it might well respond to some rough wooing. The British people have not converted en bloc to neo-liberalism. There is plenty of evidence that public attitudes towards work and the labour market have survived the Tory era and the decline of the trade unions pretty much unchanged. Tony Blair has surely known all along that the election was going to be harder fought than the polls suggested, that the Tories were out, for all the talk of death wishes and the genuine evidence there is of their power fatigue, going to hand him the contest.

He and his henchfolk need to wake up, and fast, to the fact that the Tories are starting to roll. If Labour wants to win, it cannot let the argument slip across to the Tory agenda, as it has steadily been doing these past few weeks.

He started so he'll finish

So farewell then, Britain's favourite leecher. *Masternind* succeeded in netting a wide spread of contestants. Teachers and civil servants were always over-represented, true, but it roped in the occasional taxi driver and blue collar worker who had left school early, but kept on learning. Perhaps, like, everything else, *Masternind*'s ultimate demise lay in the recipe for its success – mixing general knowledge with esoteric specialisation. In the end, anoraks had no need for an excuse to be boring. *Masternind* was at its best when you had at least a chance of following the special subject – or the unpredictability of a specialist in Marilyn Monroe, or the sex life of ladybirds, just to keep our interest.

One question though. How much will that chair he worth in a decade's time?... Pass.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Families hit by ever-longer hours of work

Sir: John Major is so wrong concerning the working week ("Tory plan to sabotage EU deal on hours and holidays", 12 November). In my professional life I come across many people (usually men) who are being pressured by employers to work longer and longer hours.

The pressure can be very subtle at times. Employers can hint that others are willing to this, or that promotional prospects may be less if extra work is not taken, or even that should redundancy come around, those less willing to work longer hours would be the first to go.

The result is that many people are under pressure to work tremendously long hours, often including a Saturday and often having to bring work home on a Sunday. The damage done to families is incalculable.

There are other families where the wage-earner is either unemployed or in a very low-paid job. Here the family is under serious financial pressure.

The Tory party claims to be the party of the family, yet its refusal to accept the Social Chapter, with limits on the working week and a minimum wage, is doing serious damage to our nation's families. The Rev MIKE BOSSINGHAM Maidenhead, Berkshire

Sir: The assertion that there is medical evidence which indicates that long working hours lead to ill health seems to me misguided. I would challenge the experts quoted ("Long days can damage your health, say scientists", 13 November) to produce this evidence. If it exists, junior doctors have recently had hours reduced, but has their health improved?

There is a widespread feeling around that "stress", which many of us feel we understand but few of us could define, causes illness. But this is a supposition, not a fact. Where is the evidence that long hours of work cause gastrointestinal problems, as your article implied?

If I were to contend that "stress" is actually good for you if it leads to a sense of achievement, there are no scientists who could prove me wrong. What matters is the nature of work, not its duration.

PAUL KELLY Digestive Disease Research Centre, St Bartholomew's, and the Royal London School of Medicine and Dentistry London E1

Sir: The members of the European Parliament, the Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Court of Justice must be increasingly frustrated by the behaviour of the United Kingdom government. How can we assure them that the views of John Major and his cabinet are not the views of a large percentage of the UK population?

Most ordinary British people desire the implementation of the Social Chapter, want a minimum wage and applaud the decision of the court about working hours and paid holidays. They long for greater European integration; the strength of a single currency and the opportunities that the European Union offers to us all.

Many of us are embarrassed by the UK government's lack of action on BSE and their response to the generous financial aid offered by our European neighbours. We



need Brussels and Strasbourg to fight the Westminster government on our behalf. Many of us consider ourselves to be Europeans first and British second; our greatest fear is of losing our European citizenship, which would be a disaster for our country but a personal tragedy for us as individuals.

We need help and protection from a government that is dictatorial, unrepresentative and acts on behalf of a small economic elite by oppressing the majority of UK citizens. We should be grateful for the European Union's continuing support and can only hope that our partners' patience does not run out. PAUL MILLER European Citizen Bristol

Sir: I never thought that Great Britain would allow itself to be taken over. I always trusted our politicians to protect us, but suddenly we discover that European law is now the supreme law of this land. That is why this week John Major, once again, has been sent packing – and always will be.

We were promised no loss of national sovereignty when we were urged to stay in the Common Market in the 1975 referendum. We have been terribly deceived and the deceit goes on. British sovereignty belongs to the British people – not to the politicians. It is up to us to say "yes" or "no" to the supremacy of Brussels over our nation, to un-elected bureaucrats forcing irreversible laws on us. CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON ZAWADSKI

Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, The Referendum Party Harrogate North Yorkshire

Sir: On the day the Government makes its brave stand against the EU's directive on working hours, you carry reports of 250 million children at work throughout the world (12 November). I hope John Major will be equally forceful in his support for other countries' right to maintain their hard-won competitive edge. JOHN CARY Birmingham

Malaysia shares E Timor blame

Sir: Your report on the vicious break-up of the East Timor conference in Kuala Lumpur (11 November) raises important questions about Malaysia's role in the East Timor tragedy. It is one thing for Malaysia, as Indonesia's neighbour and close regional partner within the Association of South East Asian Nations to show solidarity with Jakarta on this issue, quite another to provide gratuitous additional assistance.

Take the case of the East Timorese academic Mr Helder da Costa, one of the participants in the Kuala Lumpur event, who is currently enrolled in a degree course in Adelaide, South Australia. As the holder of a valid re-entry visa for Australia and someone with temporary residency rights in Australia (where he went to escape Indonesian oppression in East Timor), he should have been

allowed to return there when Malaysia began to deport the foreign conference participants earlier this week. Instead, he was returned, against his will, to Jakarta, where he was promptly arrested and taken into temporary custody by the Indonesian authorities.

With Malaysia's Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad, accusing the West of double standards over human rights issues, particularly with regard to Bosnia, Kuala Lumpur's own record may now be in for long-overdue assessment. Where better to start than last Saturday's brutally aborted East Timor conference? Dr PETER CAREY Fellow & Tutor in Modern History Trinity College Oxford

Wartime light on air crash

Sir: You reported (9 November) Pierre Salinger's claim that TWA 800 might have suffered from "friendly fire". The favoured alternative seems to be a "mechanical" failure – actually an electrochemical explosion in a fuel tank.

In 1943 I was the (ground) engineer to No 241 Squadron, Hurricane bombers, in North Africa. In successive weeks, the aircraft of a flight commander and of his successor were seen to explode in mid-air whilst dive-

bombing enemy positions. In each case, the "No 2" behind them reported no sign of enemy fire.

To restore confidence, and especially the morale of the new, third, flight commander, we carried out comprehensive checks on all the aircraft, such as testing the venting of fuel tanks, possible fuel spillages within the wings and fuselage, the earthing of the electrical system, and especially the fuel contents sensors. Nothing was found amiss.

At the end of the campaign, when the enemy had been captured or driven out of Tunisia, the sites of both crashed aircraft were available to be visited; and they were carefully inspected. It was at once seen that each aircraft had suffered an anti-aircraft shell burst directly below the centre of the fuselage. Such a burst would not have been seen by the "No 2".

For TWA 800, you reported investigators as saying "that, with 95 per cent of the plane recovered, there was no place in the fuselage... through which a missile might have travelled". I was at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough in 1954, working on anti-aircraft missiles, when the remains of the Comet salvaged from the Mediterranean were being examined. I am somewhat sceptical of the positive certainty of that statement.

Air Marshal Sir REGINALD E W HARLAND Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Noisy toys in the garden

Sir: My observance is that tidy-minded gardening ("How does your garden vac?", 13 November) is largely a male phenomenon and can be explained as an extension of housework for neurotic men too chauvinistic to lend a hand around the home.

Ann Treneman doesn't mention, however, that the worst aspect of this silliness is noise pollution: a fast-growing breed of under-occupied males is rapidly destroying every scrap of peace and quiet in their own non-working hours. If we are to allow these idle creatures to play with their noisy toys, we should at least make it clear to them that it is their inadequacies that are being tolerated, and not their virtues admired.

ANGELA FARTINGTON Appleton, Oxfordshire

Interpreting art

Sir: Andrew Graham-Dixon ("Spreading the Word", 12 November) is "disconcerted" that the Tate offers its audience video tapes about the artists taking part in this year's Turner Prize – because he considers that the tapes reduce the experience of the work by providing interpretations.

In his article, he then gets on with the job he is paid for as an art critic – providing interpretations. Are we to take it that some interpretations are less reductive than others? CHRISTOPHER SPENCER Director of Turner Prize video tapes for Channel Four London WC1

Time to break the silence

Sir: I feel uneasy about a permanent two-minute silence on Armistice Day. The First World War ended nearly 80 years ago, the Second over 50 years. The British Legion continues to do an excellent job in caring for survivors, but naturally the numbers must be declining.

Does there not come a time, as there has with many previous wars, when it is no longer appropriate to remember the dead and injured in every public way? By all means let us continue to have Poppy Day so long as there are veterans of any conflict to support. It is probably also right to have an official Day of Remembrance to which people, either in church or elsewhere, can voluntarily go.

But the time has come when the two-minute silence must be put behind us, certainly as something that politicians, the media and business feel frightened of saying "no" to. True remembrance must come from the heart and head. JAMES SEYMOUR Harrow, Middlesex

Supermarkets in a metric muddle

Sir: Stephen R Ridge (letter, November 13) claims that I have confused metrication with unit pricing. I have not. His claim that all pre-packed goods have to be sold in metric measures is a moot point.

The law requires that metric units be used as the primary size indicator. This, to me, is not the same as selling metric packs. The original draft legislation for last October's changes gave prescribed quantities for ground coffee of multiples of 250g only, and for milk (apart from returnable bottles), multiples of 200ml and 250ml.

However, by the time the law entered the statute books, these requirements had been watered down to permit the continued existence of non-metric sizes, as long as the metric equivalent came first on the label. Hence consumers are faced with packs which look similar, but which vary by 10 per cent in size. Unit-pricing on a tiny shelf-edge label is not an adequate remedy for this confusion, especially for the elderly or visually impaired. CHRIS KEENAN Liverpool

Do you read me?

Sir: I can assure Sue Wheat ("Nightmare of getting to do an 'e'", 12 November) that it is not "easy enough to plug your laptop into the [hotel] room's telephone line".

That I have risked a hernia to move a heavy bed a foot from the wall to get to the hidden BT socket to send you this letter is by no means the only nightmare one encounters in using e-mail from hotel bedrooms.

It was impossible last week in Venice, because my US jack would not fit the Italian telephone socket. It worked in Dublin a week earlier, but then I moved to the west coast where the connectors changed as fast as the weather.

I'm only able to scold this because I bought an adaptor in London this week, where I learned from the supplier that there are at least 40 different types of telephone plugs worldwide, with nine varieties within the EU. It's the hardware that's hard; the software is (comparatively) easy. MICHAEL McLOUGHLIN London SW7

analysis

£20bn has been wasted. People have died. Yet the ministry to blame is still a slave to the farming business. Only when secrecy ends will consumers come first, says Andrew Pudephatt

Maurice Callaghan, 30, died from a new variant of the brain disease CJD last November. Just three weeks ago, John Lecky, the Belfast coroner considering the case, gave his verdict. He agreed with experts' views that Callaghan's death was linked to exposure to BSE – and his words confirmed the worst fears of public health experts. The BSE crisis shows no signs of abating, and some specialists fear that deaths could increase significantly in years to come given BSE's incubation period.

We might well wonder where the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF) has been in this period and how vigorous it has been in defending the interests of the consumer. Unfortunately for us, the answer is nowhere.

After all, this is the ministry that, while the Department of Health was working on a plan to reduce fat intake in the population, sponsored a Fish and Chip Shop of the Year competition. The problem is that the ministry aims to "improve the economic performance of the

agricultural, fishing and food industries". Caught between a powerful food producers' lobby on one hand and the Treasury on the other, consumers have never featured as a high priority. The links between BSE and CJD have long been suspected – and long been covered up. At every stage, MAFF dragged its feet – refusing for two years to make BSE a notifiable disease, and only ordering the banning of offal from the food chain three years after BSE's discovery.

Nor were the European Commission officials, who should have been a backstop, much better. The commission's top agricultural bureaucrat, Guy Legras, who heads the agriculture department, wrote to other civil servants working on BSE in 1993. He warned that "all discussions on BSE inevitably cause problems in the beef market" and suggested that "in order to keep the public at ease it is essential not to provoke a re-opening of the debate. If you can help me, we need to be prudent and avoid the discussion getting into the scientific committees."

Even earlier than this, in 1990, a standing veterinary

committee within the Brussels Commission argued that it was "necessary to minimise the BSE affair by using disinformation".

Back in Britain even the Department of Health failed to make the health of the public its first priority. In the late 1980s, the Public Health Laboratory Service, funded by and accountable to the Secretary of State for Health, wanted to investigate a possible link between BSE and CJD. The Department of Health refused to allow this research to take place, since a link had not been conclusively proven. The scientist Harash Narang alleges that documents in his possession show that the Department of Health told the Public Health Laboratory Service not to investigate the new form of CJD.

If the families of those who have died from CJD do take their cases to court, it could reveal substantial disclosures of documentary proof showing the extent of the cover-up in Britain.

This refusal to face the prospect of a potential link between BSE and CJD is perhaps the only explanation for the extraordinary comment made by Dr Stephen Dorrell in March when he announced the

possibility of a link. He added: "There is no contingency plan in place."

Suspicion of a cover-up and the Government's handling of the subsequent developments have led to a collapse in public confidence. The Rowntree Reform Trust State of the Nation poll conducted in September found that three out of four people did not trust Government ministers, or their advisory committees, to tell the truth about the safety of British beef. And a Consumers' Association survey published in June found that more than 70 per cent of people thought that the Government had withheld information about the risks associated with BSE. More than two-thirds of people questioned for

the association believed that the influence of food producers had resulted in a policy that was against our interests as consumers. The Government was trusted less than any other source, including the food industry, to give impartial advice.

What started as a health crisis has become a crisis of government – and it's a crisis which illustrates a wider problem: that of government policy making.

Government ministers cannot be expected to have a detailed grasp of policy. They rely on their civil servants, who in turn seek outside advice when generating policy briefs for their departments. But while business and professional groups have frequently been consulted, consumers and users of services

rarely figure. In the case of the food industry, this has meant MAFF and NFU domination of post-war agricultural policy to the exclusion of consumer groups, environmentalists or wider taxpayer interests.

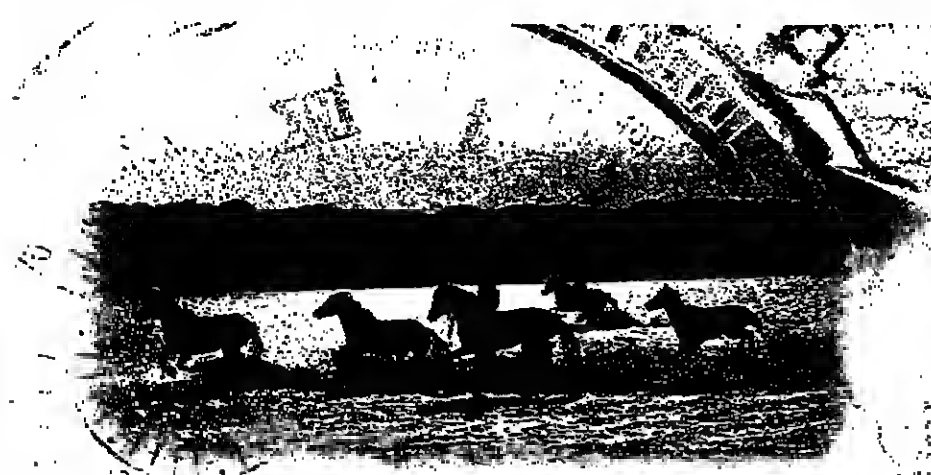
Intelligent scientific advice on BSE? As Democratic Audit (the unit which monitors the workings of our democracy from its base at Essex University) has shown, most advisory quangos are secretive and unaccountable. We are told only what they choose to tell us. We have no right to know.

It is this secret, enclosed world of policy making that is ultimately to blame for the BSE crisis. Committees meeting in private and not subject to outside scrutiny develop a cosy, consensual approach to their work. Dissidents find themselves excluded from the committees, their work denied, their access to research funds blocked, and – sometimes – even their sanity questioned.

The writer is director of Charter 88, the campaign for a fair and modern democracy. The issues in this article are to be discussed at a major conference, "BSE: a sickness of government?" to be held at Regent's College Conference Centre, Inner Circle, London, NW1 4NS on 18 November. For information phone Charter 88 on 0171-278 9188. Tickets are £20 or £10 for concessions.



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Angry young John shows Santer his claws



Miles Kingston

Today we bring you a brand new seasonal Christmas story!

Once upon a time, there was a little boy called John, who was going down the street one day when he looked in a window of a big shop called Euromart and saw a sign saying: "Open Today – Santer's Grotto!" John looked in his pockets to see how much money he had got left. Gosh! It wasn't very much! In fact, it was hardly anything.

This was because he had already lent some money to

his friend Stephen for some medicine. He had also lent some money to his friend Michael Howard, who needed some more construction kit for a fortress he was building. He had also lent some money to his other friend Michael, who was No 2 in their gang, and who hadn't said what it was for.

No wonder he had no money left.

Not downhearted, though, he went into Santer's Grotto and queued up behind all the other boys in the queue, most of whom seemed to be French and German and Italian, and seemed to be getting a lot of jolly nice presents from Santer.

"What did Santer give you?" he said to a French boy who was just coming out, but the French boy pretended not to understand and went on talking to his German playmates.

John felt a bit left out in the cold.

It's a shame, isn't it, children, when we have no friends to talk to? Perhaps, like John, we must try harder to make friends.

Finally, it was John's turn to talk to Santer. He sat on

his knee and looked up into his big knowing eyes.

"Well, John, and what do we want for Christmas?"

John was about to tell Santer what he wanted when he happened to glance out of the window. His face changed from a nice face to a nasty face.

"Never mind about that," said John. "I won't accept anything from you at all unless you behave yourself."

"Good heavens," said Santer. "What a cross little child you are. Never mind – we all get a bit over-excited at this time of year. Did you remember to write a letter to Santer this year?"

"Yes, I did," said John.

"And what did the letter say?" asked Santer gravely.

"I'll tell you," said John, pulling out a copy and putting on his spectacles. "It says, 'Dear Santer. This is just to warn you that if you don't give me what me and my friends want for Christmas, I'm jolly well going to make sure that nobody else gets what they want and I'm going to make things very difficult for you and obstruct your reindeer and everything, and make sure you don't have

time to go round the world on Christmas Eve, and ..."

"Gosh, John, we are a cross little boy, aren't we?" said Santer. "I think we've got what the pop pundits would call an attitude problem, though I don't like the phrase myself."

"Well," said John. "I don't like being told what to do by you!"

"By me?" said Santer, stroking his big white beard and patting his tummy, which was big and round because of all the paper regulations he had stuffed in his midriff.

"Have I been telling you what to do?"

"Oh, you're always telling us what to do!" said John.

"Telling us to be good, and not spend too much, and not to work too hard, and make sure everyone is a goody goody."

"Yes, but doesn't that make sense?" said Santer.

"Maybe it does," said John. "But I would like to make up my own mind about that. And another thing – I simply won't be told by you when I should do my lessons and my work and everything! So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

John's voice had suddenly risen and he had started shaking his fist in Santer's face. At first Santer was taken aback, but then he happened to notice through the window of the shop several boys staring in, and he realised that John too had noticed them. Ah, so that was it! He was trying to impress the others! "Are they your friends out there?" said Santer.

"They might be," grunted John. "Yes, it might be Malcolm and Michael and Ian and one or two others in my gang. So what?"

"Well, I just thought you might be trying to impress your friends by pretending to be rude to me," said Santer.

"What if I was?" said John rudely. "Anyway, where are my presents?"

"You're not getting any presents until you write me a nicer letter and start growing up a bit," said Santer, unexpectedly firmly. "Till then, piss off."

That wasn't a very nice thing for Santer to say, was it children? Not nice at all. On the other hand, you can't blame him either. Wouldn't you have said the same to the little brat? I know I would!

World's cheapest international phone calls

Imagine a world where you don't need to think of the price of a phone call, wherever the person you are calling happens to be. That freedom happens already on the Internet, but imagine that it will extend to ordinary voice traffic too. Friends in America? Relations in New Zealand? Pick up the phone. There is a revolution in international phone traffic coming and it is coming to Britain first.

Did you know that already more international telephone calls are made from London than from any other city on earth? In a way this is unsurprising: London is, by most measures, the world's largest international financial centre and it is the most important international hub for the world's airlines, so why not phone calls too? But it is important because it is the base from which the country is making one of those big strategic pitches for global business, a pitch to route the world's international telecommunications business through the UK.

From the end of this year any company that wants to run international calls in and out of the UK will be allowed to do so. Nearly 50 have applied and it seems most, maybe all, will get licences. Britain is the first country in the world to do this, to open its entire international phone traffic to anyone who wants to provide the service. These companies can put in their own kit, lay their fibre-optic cables, build their exchanges ("switches" in the jargon of the trade), and sell their services to whoever they want. The resulting competition will be a collapse of international call charges. Do not expect that to happen immediately, but over two or three years we will move to a position where it will cost very little more to call California than Canterbury. All the present devices that exist to get round high international charges, like Internet telephony and call-back systems, will no longer be needed. Indeed the voice telephone network will become like the Internet, a seamless global system.

We can, as a country, try to gain this advantage because for the time being physical location still matters in telecommunications. A generation ago a telephone exchange was the size of an office building; you can fit a desktop switch on the back of a trolley. Maybe in another 10 years' time, when switches are the size of suitcases, the way calls are routed won't matter. But by then, according to the consultancy Analysys, we will have exploited the first mover advantage: a vicious circle where, because most traffic is routed through the UK, more and more comms here. True, the present duopoly—BT and Cable & Wireless—will find themselves squeezed, but the prize of getting in first, and therefore achieving sufficient critical mass to be unassailable, is deemed to be worth it. It is the telecom equivalent of the City's Big Bang 10 years ago: we open up to everyone and thereby gain international market share, but at the expense of loss of local control.

So this is high in business terms for the UK.



Hamish McRae

Britain will benefit from being the switching centre for the world's telephone services

the entry barrier into exporting any phone-based service—be it advice, entertainment, information, shopping or any other interactive gimmick that entrepreneurs of the future can dream up. Enter the niche global player.

Three: expect a boom in international free-phone numbers. In America close to half the voice calls are now to free-phone numbers as businesses use this to sell and distribute their products seamlessly across the nation. The same thing is going to happen to commerce internationally. A business will simply have one number for customers to ring from anywhere in the world. It will be free to the customers and very cheap to the business. Result: a further globalisation of business.

Four: the English language will gain further ground, as a result of the previous point. Ring a Swedish company and if you get the voice mail rather than the person the message will be in English as well as Swedish. The more business takes place over the international phone lines, the more English will become the language of business worldwide. Of course English is an open standard—anyone can use it—but this should be some advantage to Anglophone countries.

Finally, expect this particular bit of deregulation to be seen, in 20 years' time, as the most important single economic decision this Government has made. We are gaining a central role in creating the high-tech infrastructure for the next century. People rightly criticise UK infrastructure, not roads and airports, certainly not railways. It is telecommunications. In a world where manufacturing (and increasingly service) technology crosses national boundaries in a matter of weeks, achieving a comparative advantage in international telecommunications is the most important thing any government can do.

But the phenomenon of very cheap international phone calls also matters enormously for the rest of the world. The fact that we will be able to call family abroad for little more than the price of a local call is one of the least important changes—nice but not something which will change the face of the earth. Here are five other, higher consequences.

One: any telephone-based service—such as banking, data processing, electronic publishing—can be located anywhere in the world where the human capital exists to carry it out. So countries, regions or cities that have lots of clever, well-educated people will be able to exploit this resource even if their physical location has worked against them in the past. Being on the fringe will no longer matter: expect, for example, north/south differences in the UK to narrow, with wealth determined by who you are, not where you are.

Two: expect small companies to prosper at the expense of large. True, there are enormous forces for agglomeration in the telecom industry itself, witness the planned merger of BT and MCI, but for users of the service, very cheap calls help the small. The lower the cost of an international phone call, the lower

Fergie may be stupid — but she's not alone

by Suzanne Moore

There has always been too much of Sarah Ferguson. I'm not talking about her weight but her presence. She was certainly too much for the Royal Family. Fergie we know eats too much, likes her sex too much, likes spending too much. In between all this conspicuous consumption she spins around the world from one ill-considered interview to the next. No wonder she is thought to be out of control. While it is claimed that her excesses have brought the monarchy into disrepute it strikes me that it is actually the other way around. The Royals need Fergie to be out of control precisely so that they can remain in control.

The more extravagant and daff she is the more self-disciplined they look. How many times do we see lists of what Fergie has spent on psychics or jewellery so we can gasp in amazement at her profligacy, her lack of taste, her sheer bloody stupidity? Here she comes again in *Hello* magazine miraculously freckle-free and chastened, whiter than white and willing to slag herself off to save us the bother. Her deranged form of self-flagellation is, of course, typically excessive. If she is to confess her sins she will confess to more sins than anyone else. If she is to be criticised by others then she will demolish herself first. All of this must be done on American chat shows and in magazines. Whatever she has discovered she has not learned to shut up or even to have a semblance of a private life.

Andrew, her ex-husband who she now defends as not being gay, by contrast does have a private life. No one is interested in how much of the Royal purse he spends each year on fripperies. No one asks him to justify his existence. No one even appears to know what this man does all day. Yet we know that in this ultimate soap it is the women, the outsiders married into this supremely dysfunctional family, who must flash their souls at us from time to time.

Diana and Fergie do not even have to resort to kiss-and-tell. The saga of the Royals is played out bizarrely through these women's very flesh. Fergie, Duchess of York, came to represent the excesses of this arcane system of rule. All talk was of a trimmer, slim-line monarchy, free of the parasitic minor Royals. When the tide turned against Fergie towards this "lean cuisine" version of bereft privilege, she also started worrying about Fergie's weight. Up and down she went, always struggling



Here is a family that makes marriage so miserable that the Duchess of York and Diana would rather be Royal outcasts

to control herself. The very idea that she can now represent Weight Watchers is heart-breaking. If anything, being a bit overweight is far less of a health risk than the yo-yo dieting that Fergie has been through.

Diana, meanwhile, played the patron saint of denial to Fergie's surplus sister, Diana, unlike Fergie, could have no food, no sex, no fun. No potatoes whatsoever. We worried about her weight too. She was thinner than ever. She suffered in silence and when her desires got out of control, she

cramped herself with food that she would throw up again. She too knew how to punish herself. This cycle of binge and purge underwrites both these women's sad lives. Fergie is now trying to purge herself in public but she can never undo all that binging.

Yet while these two women were in their various states of hysteria, crying themselves to sleep at night, where was the protective arm of the Firm? Where were those who could guide these silly young women into maturity? Fergie has

recently been describing her incarceration in Buckingham Palace while Andrew was doing the Navy work. She saw him not more than 12 nights a year. When she and Andrew asked if they could live in Portland at the married officers' quarters they were refused. The Queen and Prince Philip told them they could not be together for reasons of security. There is no reason to believe that the Duchess is lying here. For all of her faults, she is known to be honest. Her account of her marriage failing

not so much because she and Andrew did not love each other but because of the stress she was put under rings true and although the woman is still as clearly mixed-up as her metaphors, one cannot but have some sympathy towards her.

Indeed the Royals should think themselves lucky, for while Fergie is doing the rounds no one is going to look at them too closely. As long as the public can be persuaded to dislike and hate this woman then they can maintain their dignified silence behind closed doors. Far from being a disgrace to them she is a convenient side-show that prevents more awkward questions being asked. It is easier to get personal about Fergie than political about the family she married into.

Yet every single glimpse we get of her Royal in-laws reveals them in a harsher light. These are cold, cold people whose sense of duty overrode all human feeling and clouded their relationships with their own children. Their lifestyle, which they seek to preserve at all costs—the ruined lives of two of their sons' wives appear as a minor inconvenience—appears less and less to belong to the twentieth century.

It isn't simply that they have lost their moral authority as the most powerful family in the land because of a spot of marital trouble, rather that many aspects of their family life are deeply troubling and certainly out of step with the average family lives of their subjects. Most people will have relatives who are separated or divorced, most people are fairly liberal about these matters. Here, however, is a family that makes marriage so miserable that the likes of Fergie and Di would rather pay the price of being Royal outcasts than stay.

Both these women, hardly sexual revolutionaries, demanded modern marriages; that is they thought they might spend some time with their husbands. Both were denied this and half-destroyed in the process as the monarchy closed ranks around them, unable to cope with such an everyday demand.

If we are to believe that this institution can modernise and reform itself from the inside out while we sit and gawp, we are about as glib as Fergie was when she revealed all to Madame Vasso. However, while Fergie begs forgiveness in her crazed, knockabout style, the Firm does no such thing. It merely carries on up the palace, divinely assured that it never has to apologise to any of us, ever.

The gender gap election

Bill Clinton's spin doctors claim he won re-election as President of the United States last week by turning the gender gap to his advantage. And British commentators have been wondering since if Tony Blair will be able to perform the same trick by following his lead.

No one disputes the size of the US "gender gap". Polls show that women backed Clinton over Dole by 54 to 38 per cent, while men split their vote almost evenly, 43 to 44 per cent. Many leading feminists nevertheless contend that Clinton has betrayed their trust.

Clinton did pass the Violence Against Women Act and the ban on assault weapons. He claims credit for passing the family leave act, but this legislation provided only for unpaid time off work, and his increase in the minimum wage still leaves a family of four under the poverty line. It is true that he vetoed the ban on late-term abortions and made pro-choice judicial appointments; however, access to abortion for most women remains a serious problem.

Clinton appointed several women and minorities to his administration, but whenever the going got tough for his women nominees and officials, he cut them loose. Hillary's role has been reduced to that of a biscuit-baking hostess and women close to the president have remarked that he strongly prefers a traditional male working environment.

In his 1992 campaign, Clinton promised to support gay rights. In office, however, he capitulated on gays in the military, gave no power to his AIDS "czar", declared that children should only be raised by married heterosexual couples and signed a bill that allows states to ban gay marriages.

Bill Clinton may have successfully wooed the women's vote, but American feminists believe he did little to deserve it, writes Anna Marie Smith

fast food restaurant. The welfare bill makes no provision for job creation, job training or child care. Experts say that compared with all the other western countries, the US already does the least for the poor, and has the largest gap between the rich and the poor. Two out of three adults living in poverty are women and 44 per cent of single mothers remain below the poverty line.

The American child poverty rate is four times greater than the average for the EU countries. The new welfare provisions alone will throw a million more children into poverty by 2001. If a Republican president had endorsed the welfare repeal, feminists would have taken to the streets. Some feminists have tried to put a positive spin on the situation. Gloria Steinem, of *Ms Magazine*, claimed that Clinton had to sign the welfare bill to win the election, and that he would undo the damage during his second term. But polling data shows that Clinton's solid lead over a Republican nominee remained virtually constant for the 13 months leading up to the election—and he vetoed two other welfare bills during that period. Some of the Democrats who were up for re-election in the House and the Senate voted against the welfare bill and then easily won their re-election. And welfare experts, including the moderate Democrat Senator Patrick Moynihan, have declared that Clinton will not be able to reverse the new law's elimination of welfare rights.

If Clinton has proved to be less than reliable on women's issues, then how did the gender gap emerge? Image is almost

everything in American politics. Only half the eligible voting population makes the trip to the voting booth, and only a tiny minority of the voters can name the actual policies of the two main parties.

Clinton appealed to women through his use of "caring and sharing" symbolic gestures. Women voters are less likely to view the budget deficit as a priority, and they are more likely than men to support education spending, affirmative action, gay rights, health-care reform and welfare programmes. Clinton did not deliver his promised job creation scheme or health-care reform, and did little to enhance the education system. But he put more police on the beat, floated a proposal for school uniforms, and spoke out against teenage smoking and violence on television.

Above all, Clinton is an extremely skillful politician. As he shifted to the right, feminists found themselves backed into a corner. Having often pledged their firm support to Clinton early on, accepted a government appointment, or won election on his coat-tails, they felt that they could not voice their opposition.

And so Marion Wright Edelman, of the Children's Defence Fund, said nothing in public when the welfare bill was passed. Patricia Ireland, of the National Organisation of Women, was reduced to saying that she would vote for Clinton but would not campaign for him. The Americans who bothered to watch the Democratic Convention never saw feminist dissent; it was only allowed outside prime time, in unofficial venues. Socialist feminists, such as Zillah Eisenstein, Katha Pollitt, Barbara Ehrenreich and Frances Fox Piven, launched a full-scale critique of Clinton's policies but their voices were only heard in America's minuscule alternative media.

None of Clinton's feminist critics preferred Dole. But many are saying that there was very little difference between Clinton and Dole, and that the feminist movement must reconstruct its political autonomy so that it can vigorously oppose every assault on women's rights—including Clinton's.

The writer is an assistant professor in the department of government at Cornell University in New York State.

Retro chic of an egg on wheels

It was always the most British of contraptions, the perfect comic prop. In the classic automotive gag the coupling comes undone at just the wrong moment, sending the rider in one direction, the egg-on-wheels in another, usually down a slope and into a pond. There was probably something absurd about the motor-cycle sidecar even before Herbert Wilson used one to transport his son, Harold, to the football terrace of Huddersfield Town; yet there are signs that it is poised for a comeback.

Leading the way are Jennifer Paterson and Clarissa Dickson-Wright, aka BBC-2's *Two Fat Ladies*, who are cooks. They putter about the countryside on a Triumph Thunderbird combo, collecting ingredients and helping out in the nation's kitchens. Jennifer and Clarissa are part of the revival begun by Wallace and Gromit, the Oscar-winning animated dog and window-cleaner duo.

Eric Richards, the actor who plays *The Bill's* Sergeant Crier, regularly takes his wife and son to France in one. "There's been a resurgence of interest in anything that's seen as old and British," says Peter Rivers-Fletcher, Managing Director at Watsonian Squire, the world's oldest sidecar manufacturer. He estimates that there are now between 10,000 and 20,000 sidecars on Britain's roads; although 70 per cent of their output is exported, mostly

to Germany, Holland and Japan.

The sidecar had its heyday in the 1950s. During the week, the working man commuted to the factory on his motorbike (leather coat, buttons to the neck, flat cap jammed resolutely down). Come the weekend it was in theory a simple matter to hitch up the sidecar and head for the beach. For thousands of working class families the sidecar represented affordable freedom, but with the arrival of cheap cars in the early 60s, sidecars went into instant decline. "It's got all the disadvantages of a car and none of the advantages of a motorcycle," says Alan Secley of *Classic Bike* magazine.

No wonder they went out of fashion. Tony Carter of *Motorcycle News* advises anyone thinking of buying a sidecar to try it out on private land before taking to the roads. "They steer and handle very differently," he says. "You have to steer into corners, not counter-steer as you do on a solo." Even the doughty Jennifer Patterson complained of the notoriously difficult steering, when she switched to a Triumph from her 90cc moped (which she likes to call "my little fellow"). When pushed, a spokeswoman for *Two Fat Ladies* admitted that the pair do not actually ride the bike and sidecar from location to location: they transport it on a truck.

James Ferguson



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Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2088
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

BT asks Government to lift golden share

Chris Godsmark
and Michael Harrison

BT has begun negotiations with the Government in an attempt to remove its protection against takeovers provided since privatisation 12 years ago by the so-called "golden share" in the company.

The move is aimed at persuading US regulators to approve its proposed £13bn takeover of MCI, the American long-distance phone operator, by demonstrating that the UK market is open to competition and BT is no longer protected from takeover.

The golden share allows the Government to veto changes to BT's constitution which prevents anyone from owning more than 15 per cent of the shares. The provisions, which also apply to Cable & Wireless, were designed to prevent the companies from being bought up by unwelcome foreign predators.

Since the announcement of the MCI merger, the biggest such deal in UK corporate history, on 3 November the issue of the golden share has become a potentially serious stumbling block for the US telephone watchdog, the Federal Communications Commission.

The FCC has to give the MCI link-up its approval if the deal is to go ahead. BT must prove to officials that US companies could enjoy the same competitive access to British telecommunications markets that BT will get in the US. AT&T, the largest US phone company, has pledged to fight the deal on the grounds that BT still has a virtual monopoly of the local telephone network to UK homes.

Last night a senior US government source said removing the golden share would eliminate one of the FCC's biggest worries. The source said: "The golden share is certainly a cause of some concern. Unavoidably so. The idea that BT could buy all of MCI without US operators having the same opportunity to take over BT raises serious worries for us."

However any move to lift BT's golden share would almost certainly have to apply to Cable and Wireless as well. This could pose difficulties for Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade.

"There are hurdles to overcome, but they are not insurmountable"

Although BT may be protected from takeover by its sheer size, C&W, valued at £13bn, would be more vulnerable. AT&T is thought to have looked at mounting a bid in the past but was deterred by the Government's special share.

The BT proposal is not thought to have been considered yet by Mr Lang or the DTI minister responsible for competition, John Taylor. But any decision would have to be approved at Secretary of State level.

The golden shares in BT and C&W have no time limit, unlike those in the regional electricity companies.

Earlier this year Mr Lang refused to lift the golden shares

in National Power and PowerGen, the electricity generators, after the US electricity company Southern disclosed that it was interested in bidding for National Power.

Mr Lang defended his decision on the grounds that the electricity generation market was not yet sufficiently open to competition. On those grounds he would have difficulty abolishing BT's golden share since it still controls more than 90 per cent of the UK market.

The only time a golden share was lifted, allowing a hostile foreign bid to go ahead, was when Ford of the US bought Jaguar for £1.6bn in 1989.

Speaking yesterday, Sir Peter Bonfield, BT's chief executive, said he believed the deal with MCI would take a year to get approval. "There are hurdles to overcome, but nobody believes they are insurmountable," he said.

Separately BT gave the first indications that its huge increase in advertising and marketing spending was holding competitors in the cable industry at bay. Announcing its half-yearly profits, the company disclosed that it had doubled marketing spending so far this year, adding around an extra £60m to its advertising bill. The "good-to-talk" campaign helped to raise call volumes by 11 per cent between June and September.

Pre-tax profits fell slightly from £1.61bn to £1.599bn in the six months to September, as a result of the near doubling of redundancy costs from £1.23m to £2.35m. Some 3,200 staff left BT over the period, many of them from middle management jobs.

Comment, page 21
Hamish McRae, page 19



Centre stage: BT's chief executive, Sir Peter Bonfield (right), and finance director, Robert Brace, announce half-yearly profits Photograph: FT

Michael Harrison
and Chris Godsmark

PowerGen to buy back another 10% of shares

PowerGen, the electricity generator, is to buy back a further 10 per cent of its shares, bringing the amount of capital handed back to shareholders in the past 18 months to more than £1bn.

This makes PowerGen the first company to embark on a major share repurchasing exercise since the Government outlawed the tax credits available on such buybacks and special dividends.

The buyback would cost PowerGen around £370m at current market prices and would mean

that it has repurchased almost 30 per cent of its shares since the Government sold its remaining holding in the company in spring last year.

Ed Wallis, PowerGen's chairman, denied the buyback proved it had plenty of money to pay Labour's threatened windfall tax or that it made it a virtual certainty that the com-

pany would be included in the scope of the levy. "I don't think this does show we can afford the tax. It is a one-off situation and really quite separate," he said.

Mr Wallis also said that if the tax were to be imposed only on utilities that were monopolies, price controlled and had been

suggested, then PowerGen did not fit any of those categories. British Telecom, meanwhile, said it did not believe it would have to pay the tax because the company was now exposed to full competition for phone services. BT is also due to pay a £2.2bn special dividend to shareholders next year.

Sir Peter Bonfield, the chief executive, said: "We don't believe we fall into the definition of what the Labour Party is saying. We don't fall into the definition of a utility."

PowerGen spent £367m buying 10 per cent of its shares in May and June after the Government blocked its £1.95bn bid for Midlands Electricity.

The buyback came as PowerGen unveiled a 4 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £138m for the first half and a market share of 22 per cent.

Separately, South West Water yesterday unveiled a better-than-expected 35 per cent increase in half-yearly pre-tax profits to £72.9m.

GUS shares soar on £1bn acquisition

Nigel Cope

Great Universal Stores, the mail order giant, made a surprise move yesterday when it agreed to pay £1bn for Experian, an American information services company. It is GUS's first significant acquisition for more than 30 years.

GUS's shares soared 57.5p to 648p on the news as the City took the deal as a sign of a new era at the slumbering retail giant where Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale took over as chairman in August.

The City had been pondering the possibility of a share buy-back, a demerger of the group's Burberry division, or a deal to acquire Next, the highly successful stores group where Lord Wolfson is non-executive chairman.

Lord Wolfson admitted publicly for the first time yesterday that the GUS board had discussed the possibility of a Next takeover "several times".

The Experian acquisition virtually wipes out GUS's £1.2bn cash pile, leaving the company with net cash of £150m.

GUS is buying Experian to merge it with CCN, its own credit rating and database business which has been the fastest growing part of the group over the last four years. Discussions on the deal started in June.

"This is a unique opportunity to create a truly global business with the fullest range of information products across the globe," Lord Wolfson said. He added that it would give the enlarged business critical mass in the US, enable it to offer a more comprehensive service to multinational clients and reduce the cost of new product develop-

ment. It will be able to expand more rapidly in developing economies where use of credit is growing rapidly.

Both CCN and Experian have developed vast databases on consumers, businesses, vehicles and property. CCN holds credit details on 44 million people, 3 million businesses and 50 million vehicles. Experian's three databases - on consumers, businesses and real estate - contain information on 190 million individuals, 31 million households and 53 million properties.

CCN is stronger in retail location services where it works on behalf of companies such as McDonald's and Boots to target the best locations for new outlets. Experian has been developing a powerful new software system, File One.

Based in Orange County, California, Experian was originally part of TWR, a US automotive and engineering company. It was sold to a consortium of businesses in February for \$1.2bn (£721m). It recorded profits of \$109m on sales of \$540m last year though profits growth has been slowing. CCN was founded in 1980 and is based in Nottingham. It recorded profits of £24m on sales of £118m last year.

City analysts welcomed the deal. Tony Shire of BZW said it reduced GUS's dependence on the UK mail order market and would add £30m of profits next year. John Richards of NatWest Securities said that while the deal "looked good", the decline of GUS's core home shopping business still needed to be addressed.

GUS reports its half-year results in two weeks.

Cautious backing for EU's steel state aid regime

Michael Harrison

The European Union last night agreed a new state aid regime for the steel industry after a compromise deal that will allow Brussels to block subsidies that distort competition but still allow governments to fund closure programmes.

The regime, which will run for five years from next January, was given a cautious welcome

by the British Government and British steelmakers.

Britain, supported by Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands, had insisted that the new code be as least as tough as the existing regime for fear that countries in southern Europe would be tempted to unfairly subsidise their steel industries.

The new regime will allow steelmakers to receive aid for research and development pro-

jects, environmental protection and partial closure programmes.

The provisions agreed last night are much tougher than those originally proposed by Brussels in March, which some members states had feared would fail to tackle the problem of overcapacity and lead to further pricing wars.

Since 1993 more than £6bn has been paid in state aid to ailing steel companies, mainly in

southern Europe, distorting the market and hampering British Steel and other UK producers.

Had EU ministers not agreed on a new regime from 1 January, then all state aid applications would have had to have been vetted individually by the Council of Ministers.

Greg Knight, Britain's industry minister, welcomed the new code, saying: "I am pleased that after some hard negotia-

tions, agreement has been reached on tight state aid to the steel industry. This success has avoided the undesirable prospect of a period without a code which would have encouraged further support for uncompetitive companies and would run counter to the terms of the common market."

The British Iron and Steel Producers Association gave more cautious backing, saying that whether the new code resulted in real and efficient control of state aid would depend on the commission's determination to stamp out competitive distortions.

RBS to sell life stake to Widows

Nic Cicutti

Royal Bank of Scotland said yesterday it was preparing to sell a stake of at least 20 per cent in its life assurance subsidiary to the mutually-owned insurer Scottish Widows, in a move which some analysts said could lead to a merger between both companies.

The two companies' announcement of plans to work together follow the ending by RBS of its relationship with Scottish Equitable.

Scottish Equitable, owned by the Dutch company Aegon,

is selling back its 20 per cent share in RBS' bancassurance subsidiary, Royal Scottish Assurance (RSA). It is understood the bank was unhappy with Aegon's acquisitive strategy. Scottish Widows is expected to buy a similar number of shares in RSA.

Both the bank and the Widows yesterday declined to set a value on the stake at issue. Analysts said that RSA was valued at about £80m, which would lead to a price of between £15m and £20m.

George Mathewson, chief executive at Royal bank of

Scotland, said he hoped to reach an agreement with Widows in a few weeks. The life insurer is likely to play a wider role with RSA than Scottish Equitable did.

Mr Mathewson said: "We're focused at the moment on Royal Scottish Assurance, but we do see the potential for other types of co-operation and so we're building a relationship which will give us a stability and a confidence whereby we can develop other products."

In addition to providing administrative services for Royal Scottish Assurance and devel-

oping a range of products, Widows will also play a crucial role in the expansion of Direct Line Life, the telephone-based life division of RBS.

Scottish Widows has in the past 12 months launched a highly successful pensions-selling operation by telephone. Mike Ross, group chief executive at Scottish Widows, said: "The fact that we are able to work together in this way shows that it is possible to make a distinction between co-operation and integration."

Both companies are worth about £4bn.

Labour and Knight to meet

Jill Treanor
Banking Correspondent

Mike O'Brien, the Labour Party's financial services spokesman, will next week meet Angela Knight, the Treasury minister, to try to hammer out an agreement over the Government's controversial plans to make changes to the Building Societies Bill.

The Labour Party's support for the proposed legislation is vital if Mrs Knight is to get her new-look Bill through Parliament. "I hope we can achieve consensus," Mr O'Brien said yesterday. "We want to see this Bill on the statute books."

The planned changes to the Bill could delay share and cash hand-outs to millions of building society members. They may even threaten the plans of some societies to convert into banks next year.

The proposal causing the main concern among the converting societies is the removal of five-year protection against being taken over once they

have become banks. The newly converted banks would lose the protection immediately after buying a building society or any other type of financial institution.

Societies are also concerned about confusion over the planned legislation which may force them to revise the weighty transfer documents that must be sent to the members before they can become banks.

"It's quite feasible that if legislation gets anywhere near the statute books in this shape, the board of directors would have to look very, very carefully as to whether to go ahead with the flotation," John Cairne, director of corporate affairs at the Alliance & Leicester building society said yesterday.

The Alliance & Leicester has already sent a 96-page transfer document to each of 3.5 million members.

The planned removal of takeover protection has pleased the Building Societies Association, which has lobbied hard to get this right removed.

Andrew Large set for five more years as head of SIB

Nic Cicutti

Sir Andrew Large, chairman of the Securities and Investments Board, is believed to be discussing the possibility of a further five-year term at the helm of the City regulator when his period of office ends next year.

It is understood that Sir Andrew, 54, may have been unofficially sounded out by the Treasury with a view to staying on at the SIB. An announcement is expected early next year.

His continued presence at SIB is seen as ensuring that work begun by the regulator on the pensions mis-selling review, together with longer-term initiatives, is completed.

It is understood that the re-appointment of Sir Andrew would not be opposed by Labour or the Conservatives, regardless of which party wins the general election.

Mike O'Brien, the Labour party's financial services spokesman, has committed himself to a review of financial

services, with a beefed-up SIB taking on the role of various smaller front-line regulators.

Sir Andrew, it was suggested by a source yesterday, might be allowed to continue in his £180,000 chairman's post for some time before handing on to a younger person in a few years' time.

Since taking over at SIB, Sir Andrew, a former banker who joined the regulator in mid-1992, has been heavily involved in identifying and resolving the pension mis-selling scandal.



Sir Andrew Large: May remain at the helm

STOCK MARKETS														
FTSE 100			Dow Jones*			Nikkei								
Actual	Close	Day's change	Change(%)	1996 High	1996 Low	YTD(%)	1996 High	1996 Low	YTD(%)					
	3926.80	-7.40	-0.2	4073.10	3632.30	4.02		6190	5780	2.91		15832	15000	-5.15
*The Jones graph at 1200 lines														
FTSE 100 Index														
Index	Close	Day's change	Change(%)	1996 High	1996 Low	YTD(%)								
FTSE 100	3926.80	-7.40	-0.2	4073.10	3632.30	4.02								
FTSE 250	4410.20	+5.40	+0.1	4568.60	4015.30	3.54								
FTSE 500	1961.20	-2.30	-0.1	2022.10	1816.60	3.91								
FTSE SmallCap	2161.57	+1.53	+0.1	2244.36	1994.06	3.15								
FTSE All-Share	1936.77	-2.02	-0.1	1994.54	1791.95	3.86								
New York	6274.24	+8.20	+0.1	6266.04	5032.94	2.15								
Tokyo	20979.44	-229.59	-1.1	22666.80	18734.70	0.767								
Hong Kong	12943.69	+137.38	+1.1	12943.69	10204.87	3.251								
Frankfurt	2773.43	+39.13	+1.4	2773.43	2253.36	1.731								
Statistics as of 14 November														

INTEREST RATES									
Short sterling			UK medium gilt			US long bond			
3m	6.18	6.18	7.5	7.5	7.5	10y	7.80	7.71	7.93
6m	6.18	6.18	8.22	8.22	8.22	20y	8.22	8.22	8.22
1y	6.18	6.18	8.22	8.22	8.22	30y	8.22	8.22	8.22
2y	6.18	6.18	8.22	8.22	8.22	40y	8.22	8.22	8.22
3y	6.18	6.18	8.22	8.22	8.22	50y	8.22	8.22	8.22
4y	6.18	6.18	8.22	8.22	8.22	60y	8.22	8.22	8.22
5y	6.18	6.18	8.22	8.22	8.22	70y	8.22	8.22	8.22
6y	6.18	6.18	8.22	8.22	8.22	80y	8.22	8.22	8.22
7y	6.18	6.18	8.22	8.22	8.22	90y	8.22	8.22	8.22
8y	6.18	6.18	8.22	8.22	8.22	100y	8.22	8.22	8.22

CURRENCIES											
£/\$			£/DM			£/¥					
100	1.6532	+0.056	1.5580	100	0.6049	-0.24	0.6414	100	168.05	+1.376	1.5579
50	0.8266	+0.028	0.7790	50	0.3024	-0.12	0.3207	50	84.02	+0.688	0.7790
25	0.4133	+0.014	0.3895	25	0.1512	-0.06	0.1603	25	42.01	+0.344	0.3895
10	0.1653	+0.006	0.1558	10	0.0605	-0.02	0.0641	10	16.80	+0.138	0.1558
5	0.0827	+0.003	0.0779	5	0.0302	-0.01	0.0321	5	8.40	+0.069	0.0779
2	0.0331	+0.001	0.0312	2	0.0121	-0.004	0.0128	2	3.36	+0.028	0.0312
1	0.0166	+0.000	0.0156	1	0.0060	-0.002	0.0064	1	1.68	+0.014	0.0156
0.5	0.0083	+0.000	0.0078	0.5	0.0030	-0.001	0.0032	0.5	0.84	+0.007	0.0078
0.25	0.0041	+0.000	0.0039	0.25	0.0015	-0.000	0.0016	0.25	0.42	+0.004	0.0039

Dollar				
	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	
£ (London)	1.6532	+0.056	1.5580	£ (London)
\$ (NY)	1.6605	+1.376	1.5579	\$ (NY)
DM (London)	2.4910	+2.244	2.1947	DM (London)
¥ (London)	164.530	+71.195	157.403	¥ (London)
\$ Index	91.3	+0.7	82.6	\$ Index

OTHER INDICATORS				
	Yesterday	Day's High	Year Ago	
DM on Brent \$	23.89	+1.37	16.65	RPI
Gold \$	383.05	+2.15	385.90	GDP
				152.6+2.12pc
				150.6 14 Nov
				105.7 2.3pc 105.7
				105.7 Jan 27

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مكتبة من الامم



BSkyB talks are opening a Pandora's box

At the end of the day, David, it's only fair to say, we're really over the moon on this one. And well they might be. The possibility of pay per view being introduced early for top football matches sent share prices among the quoted clubs soaring yesterday. It is not hard to see why. Just as the introduction of subscription television was great news for the Premier League, allowing football clubs to charge hitherto undreamt of sums for TV rights, pay per view is going to be even better.

Some of the figures being talked of yesterday may be an exaggeration but there is no doubt that top clubs stand to get a lot more out of pay per view than the present all embracing contract with BSkyB. There is, apparently, no limit on what the committed football fan is prepared to pay. A good deal for football clubs then, or some of the top ones anyway, but is it such a great one for BSkyB? That it is assumes BSkyB can both maintain its monopoly of the League and make stick the 50/50 split in revenues between club and distributor proposed. To pull that off is going to require some fancy footwork by Sky, for once the League begins to fragment into club by club deals, it will grow progressively harder to keep control of the show.

Until recently Sky held all the cards. Though others tried to snatch the Premier League from Sky's grasp, the outcome was never in any doubt, for Sky is the only broadcaster capable of reaching enough viewers

- 4m potentially - to make the sums add up. The strong likelihood that pay-per-view, rather than bog standard pay-TV, will be the format of the future has meant that the advantage is swinging away from the distributor and towards the rights holder.

Up until now Sky has prospered because it was the only game in town, controlling all the sport and movie rights and extracting onerous terms from content suppliers desperate for carriage. That will not be true when cable reaches critical mass, and when (or if) digital terrestrial television is introduced. Furthermore, as soon as that nice Mr Blair frees up BT to offer broadcast TV, there'll be another powerful competitor in the market place. BSkyB has a head's start and the best developed plans for digital TV of any company. Moreover, Sky already has a subscription TV contract with the League, so unless regulators force the pace, it doesn't for the time being have to go down the pay per view route. By talking to the clubs about doing so Sky is opening Pandora's box. There is every possibility that pay per view will usher in a flood of new competitors and undermine Sky's present stranglehold in the process.

GUS goes on a shopping spree

The top brass at Great Universal Stores was apparently expecting the company's

shares to fall yesterday on news of its £1bn Californian swoop. That they rose instead was due less to City admiration for what GUS had done, and more to the fact that this slumbering old giant had done anything at all. Good old Gussie's has become so notorious for inaction that first reaction could only be one of elated astonishment. Surely not GUS, not £1bn, not in America?

This is a dusty old company that has not done a sizeable deal in 30 years, squirreling away £1bn plus in cash as a result. It has never tapped the market for new equity and never had any borrowings of any significance. It has never even had a finance director, preferring a treasury function instead. But suddenly strange things are happening. It all seems to be down to the new man at the top. While he has the same name as the last two, Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale, also chairman of Next, doesn't seem to belong to the same family. He has pledged a more open relationship with the City. Analysts were even granted an audience yesterday. A public relations company has been hired to spread the gospel according to GUS far and wide. And now he's gone out and spent the group's entire cash pile in one go.

A new man in a hurry with a big balance sheet behind him is generally a pretty deadly combination. Furthermore, when a company has been "asleep" as long as GUS has there's every possibility of accidents as it arises from its slumbers. And when so many UK retailers have come a cropper in the "graveyard"

US market, how can we be sure GUS will fare any better?

But for the time being the new Wolfson at the helm perhaps deserves the benefit of the doubt. Credit rating and information services are growth markets. Putting Experian together with GUS's existing CCN division will create one of the largest companies of its kind in the world. Knowledge of what everyone eats for breakfast and the like is apparently a valuable commodity among the world's leading multi-nationals.

Lord Wolfson makes a good case for this takeover and the markets are with him. For his next trick, he will need to deliver better performance in the core home shopping division, which was the cause of May's unprecedented profits warning.

DTI should surrender golden shares

When it comes to using its golden share in privatised companies, the Government's track record has proved decidedly patchy. So it should be interesting to see how Ian Lang reacts to British Telecom's request that the Government should either give up or substantially alter its right of veto over what happens in the telecoms industry.

The general policy of ministers has been to issue these things a bit like Blue Peter badges and then leave them to gather dust in the attic until some upstart Johnny for-

eigner comes along wanting to buy a piece of the British industrial landscape.

In the case of Jaguar, which was supposed to be protected from foreign takeover for five years, the golden share turned out to be made of balsa wood. The Government gave up its special share as soon as the first suitor, Ford, motored into view. However, when another US predator tried to sneak up on National Power from behind Mr Lang lost no time in raising the golden share to his breast, thus sending the rotters packing.

On that occasion, the logic was that the electricity generation market was not fully open to competition. If he applied the same criteria to BT then the golden share would have to stay in place since BT still controls more than 90 per cent of the market.

There is, however, a big difference this time around. It is BT which is forcing the issue, not an overseas predator. BT thinks the protective arm of Mr Lang needs removing from around its shoulder if it is to persuade the Americans that they should have no objection to the takeover of MCI.

The added complication is that if BT's golden share is removed, the same will have to happen to Cable and Wireless. BT's sheer size may deter all but the biggest bidder but C&W, capitalised at £10.6bn, could be much more easily digested. But if the DTI really believes in all that rhetoric about Britain being in the van of liberalisation, then it should surrender its golden shares in both companies.

50% float of Equity & Law could raise £400m

Nic Cicutt

Equity & Law, the UK subsidiary of giant insurer Axa which earlier this week announced a merger with the rival French UAP group, is considering a partial stock market flotation in a move that could raise up to £400m.

The partial flotation of up to 50 per cent of Equity & Law's holding is understood to be the outcome of initial discussions between the UK firm, based in High Wycombe, and its French parent.

However, a wholesale float is thought to have been ruled out, in part because of objections by Axa's chairman, Claude Bebeac. One industry source said Mr Bebeac does not want to relinquish the company's stake in a UK subsidiary.

Although no firm decision has been taken, an announcement is thought likely next year.

The partial flotation would reflect a similar strategy adopted by both Axa and Union des Assurances de Paris (UAP), the French firm with which it is about to merge in a £5.3bn deal.

UAP, which owns Sun Life, a life and pensions company in the UK, part-floated 40 per cent of its UK arm earlier this year, raising up to £500m, although the exercise was marred by falling stock markets.

The company said at the time that its decision followed flotations around the world, aimed at giving its subsidiaries greater local involvement while subjecting it to local "shareholder discipline".

Axa, which has large stakes in National Mutual in Australia and Equitable in the US, has also opted for part-floations of the companies it owns.

Earlier this week, Axa and UAP announced their merger, a decision which will create the world's second-largest insurance company after Nippon

Life of Japan. In terms of assets under management, the combined group will be the world's largest insurer, with almost £300bn under their joint control.

Under the terms of the deal Axa, Europe's third-largest insurer, is in effect taking over its larger rival UAP, which was privatised in 1994.

Axa and UAP said they would capitalise on their complementary businesses and geographical presence. The combined group will become the number one insurer in France and the insurers said they would rank among the leaders in the UK, Belgium, Germany and Spain. The deal will increase their presence in Italy and the Netherlands.

Analysts said yesterday the apparent contradiction of two rival companies, Sun Life and Equity & Law, both operating in the UK, meant a decision would be needed whether to integrate both companies.

Axa's subsidiary made profits of £57m in the year to December 1995, while grabbing a 2.7 per cent share of the UK life market.

But figures provided to analysts this week suggest that Sun Life, which is valued at about £1bn, is not only higher than Equity & Law, but also more successful in terms of premium income from policies sold and in its curbing of management costs.

Equity & Law's French parent is known to have considered acquisitions as a means of beefing up its operation in the UK and has complained in the past that its business interests here are too small.

Several sources in Equity & Law said yesterday that a partial flotation was an option being discussed. However, integration with Sun Life has also not been ruled out completely, potentially moving its head office to Bristol.



Off the mark: Some economists believe that Kenneth Clarke's inflation target is unachievable

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Inflation leap shocks City

The Government has almost no chance of meeting its inflation target, economists warned yesterday, after the release of much worse-than-expected inflation figures for October, fuelled by sharply higher petrol prices and housing costs.

The underlying rate of inflation, which is the most closely monitored measure and excludes mortgage interest costs, rose from an annual rate of 2.9 per cent in September to 3.3 per cent last month, compared with the market forecast of 3.1 per cent. The Treasury's stated aim remains to bring the underlying rate to 2.5 per cent or below by the next election.

One economist, Adam Cole from HSBC James Capel, described the figures as "very disappointing indeed" and worse, on an underlying basis, than any other European Union country apart from Greece.

He added: "The Chancellor's target of 2.5 per cent now looks virtually unachievable. I just don't see how he can hit it." Eddie George, the Government of the Bank of England, has repeatedly said he believes further increases in interest

rates will be necessary to curb inflation on top of the recent 0.25 per cent increase. Economists said the pressure on Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, to raise rates before the general election would become intense.

Other inflation measures also rose by more than predicted. The headline rate surged from 2.1 per cent in the year to September to 2.7 per cent in October, while the Bank of England's preferred figure, which strips out both mort-

gage payments and indirect taxes, jumped from 2.5 per cent to 3 per cent.

The figures provide fresh evidence that the economic recovery is having a clear impact on prices. Though manufacturers' wholesale prices remain depressed, the data suggests retailers are using improving consumer confidence to boost their profit margins.

Measuring costs went up by 6.4 per cent compared with the previous year, largely because of the increase in petrol prices. The Office for National Statistics, which compiles the figures, said the price of petrol had risen by around 4p a litre since July. More increases are possible as higher oil prices feed through to the petrol pumps.

Crestco resists City calls to suspend operations

Peter Rodgers
Financial Editor

Crestco, the company operating the stock market's new settlement system, is resisting growing pressure in the City to suspend its commissioning programme while software problems are sorted out.

Some board members favour calling a complete halt to the transfer of companies' share

registers to the new Crest settlement system for weeks or months, because of alarm about its performance.

Crestco admitted yesterday a delay of a month or two beyond the April date scheduled for full operation was likely to be an option discussed at a meeting of the board on 25 November. Another possibility could be further delays in transferring FTSE 100 companies to Crest.

Crest sources also suggested that the Securities and Futures Authority could limit the amount of business done by some firms that have had difficulty coping with the new system, because of the financial risk of settlement delays.

However, Iain Saville, chief executive, insisted he would resist any delays to the present overall timetable of full operation by April, and he said there

was no crisis, "only inevitable teething problems with a very complex system".

Mr Saville said there had been a significant and noticeable improvement in the much criticised performance of the settlement system over the last 10 days. He added: "We hope to demonstrate to the board that Crest is stable enough to push ahead with the transition timetable."

If City critics of Crest win the day at the board meeting and force a suspension, it will be a severe embarrassment for the Bank of England, which steered the Crest project through to fruition after the Stock Exchange's Taurus settlement system was abandoned. The Stock Exchange is keeping open the option of continuing for longer with the old Taurus settlement system, just in case.

Mr Saville said the board's decision would be a difficult one, adding that the company would have to talk "to the SIB, the SFA and the Stock Exchange about whether the industry... is ready for the continued pace of transition". He admitted however that a problem with a piece of software called Circles was Crestco's fault, but said it affected only 2 to 3 per cent of settlements.

Digital bidders scramble for pay-TV football

Mathew Horsman
and Patrick Toohy

Efforts by leading Premier League clubs to push ahead with pay-per-view broadcasts of top football have energised British broadcasters, many of which have now advanced their own pay-per-view plans, according to sources.

At least two bidders for digital terrestrial television licences, currently on offer from the Independent Television Commission, plan to focus on sport, including pay-per-view events as the main driver of their new services. They are expected to talk to Premier League clubs in coming months about securing pay-per-view rights to matches.

But BSkyB, which currently holds the exclusive live rights to games as negotiated collectively by the Premier League, is expected to fight hard to extend its contract to include pay-per-view. Big clubs, including Newcastle and Manchester United, are believed to be committed to generating maximum returns

from their matches, and have been resisting suggestions from the Sky camp that revenues from pay-per-view be split equally between the rights holder and the broadcaster.

Manchester United, in particular, is known to be pushing for the early introduction of pay-per-view. A leading institutional shareholder in the club said: "Manchester United has the least need of the collective bar-

gaining process, as they are the highest name in the game."

Meanwhile, the cable industry, under the leadership of Telewest, the second-largest operator, is in the early stages of planning a pay-per-view movie service aimed at giving cable an advantage over satellite in the digital age. It is believed that Cable & Wireless Communications, the nation's largest operator, is also involved in the discussions. The

companies plan to handle "pay-per-view" movies with cheap technology, as a key marketing tool.

The moves are linked to growing expectations that pay-per-view will be the fastest growing industry in the media by the turn of the decade. According to a study by Salomon Brothers, the merchant bank, pay-per-view in Europe could generate £3bn a year by 2001 and £9bn annually by 2005.

News of the accelerated pay-per-view plans sent the shares of Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur climbing. Manchester United closed at 532.5p, up 26.5p, while Tottenham was ahead 14.5p at 545p. BSkyB saw a brief rise in carling trading but settled back to close at 519.5, down 1.5p on the day.

Media analysts said yesterday that regulatory pressures on BSkyB, the dominant pay-TV broadcaster, as well as the likelihood of increased competition would combine to create opportunities for new entrants to the pay-per-view market.

Michael Green's Carlton Communications, among other bidders, is expected to apply for a digital terrestrial television licence, in league with Mirror Group, owners of 46 per cent of The Independent. Carlton bid £650m for the last Premier League contract, in competition with Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB. Even BT, the telecoms giant, is expected to enter the pay-per-view market, which it sees as a key future source of revenue.

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252	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
253	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
254	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
255	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
256	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
257	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
258	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
259	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
260	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
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277	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
278	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
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281	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
282	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
283	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
284	30	Black Hawk	88	1	71	221	390	348	148 PNC	190/1	19	1743	9500
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Scott Highland Hoops
Life Electronics

Lloyd's to be given new look as a business

Peter Rodgers
Financial Editor

The Lloyd's insurance market is to overhaul its own central organisation to give it a more business-like shape, Ron Chandler, the chief executive, announced yesterday.

Weeks after the completion of a £3.2bn rescue plan, Mr Chandler said the restructuring would split Lloyd's central services department, with turnover of £180m a year, into five new business units, each of which would have its own managing director and managing board.

Mr Chandler said: "They will be run as businesses with as much bottom-line discipline as can be engineered."

The restructuring comes after a detailed consultation with members and is a response to widespread criticism in the market of the way Lloyd's is managed internally.

Rather than a direct result of the rescue plan, it appears to be a case of catching up on reforms that were put to one side as the market struggled to survive after losing £8bn in a few years.

Firms told Lloyd's that they wanted greater transparency of activities, including costs and charges, more accountability and responsiveness and wider choice of where they buy their services. They will be charged for what they use, rather than flat fees.

As part of the plan, Lloyd's intends to open up some services to outside competition, so firms in the market can choose whether to buy from Lloyd's or from independent companies. At the same time, Lloyd's wants its new business units to seek work outside the market, from the rest of the insurance industry in the City. Mr Chandler said: "If a unit is not proving responsive to the needs of the market the demands for its services will atrophy."



Shaping up: David Rowland will be freed to focus on longer-term issues by the creation of new business units

The restructuring is separate from Lloyd's plans for cost reductions but Mr Chandler acknowledged that more jobs are to go among Lloyd's staff and contract workforce of 2,400.

He said: "Inevitably, in a business in which people are an important part of the costs I anticipate that there will be job losses."

The five new businesses are members' services, which includes financial housekeeping for the membership, and insurance services, which embrace the

policy-signing office and the claims office.

The others will be facilities management; business development; and North America, which will promote the market and liaise with regulators in the US and Canada.

The units will each be responsible to a user board which will include representatives from the market. Mr Chandler said the new structure would allow the board of the market, chaired by David Rowland, to focus on strategic and longer-term issues.

City wary of the changing face of BT

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMOND

When Sir Peter Bonfield arrived at BT's headquarters earlier this year as the corporation's new chief executive, he immediately began a campaign to fight bureaucracy and remove the last traces of civil service culture. Ten months later much has changed at BT Centre and much has happened to BT, with the £13bn takeover of MCI to name but one. But Sir Peter has been unable to lift BT's share price.

The MCI deal provided two convincing reasons why the underlying value of BT shares should have risen from around 350p to 400p. The first is that the company will pay a 35p-a-share special dividend next September, which should in theory give a short-term lift to the price. Secondly, the company also pledged to pay total dividends of 19.85p for this year, a rise of 6.1 per cent on last year. Another boost should have come from the more generous price formula agreed with the industry regulator, Ofcom, which from next August excludes almost all business calls from price controls. It means just 20 per cent of BT's call revenues will be subject to price regulation, compared with 60 per cent today.

Yet despite all this, the shares have been disappointing, briefly surging to 385p after the announcement, only to fall back towards 360p in the days that followed. There are two reasons for this, one strategic, the other technical. Firstly, worries over regulation are being replaced by new fears over BT's international expansion. If the MCI deal goes through in a year, it will transform the company's balance sheet, adding £3.5bn of debt, and transform BT from a safe utility into a growth-orientated telecoms group. Nobody, apart from management, is sure it can handle the transition.

The second concern perplexing City analysts is that after the special dividend has been paid out, the annual dividend payout will be rebased, in BT's words, by about 10 per cent. This means that the annual dividend for 1997-8, the year after the merger, will start from a 10 per cent lower base, though a likely growth rate of 6 to 7 per cent means the net reduction could be a more modest 3 per cent.

However, yesterday's second-quarter results gave investors food for thought. BT is clearly starting to successfully fight back against cable companies, with growth of 11 per cent in inland call volumes between the first and second quarters. Turnover also rose more strongly than last year, up by 4.9 per cent to £3.73bn between June and September. So the picture of a declining utility searching overseas for excitement may have been overblown. Expect static profits for the year to

the end of March of £3.1bn. A prospective yield of 6.7 per cent, with the shares up 9p at 369.5p, should underpin them. But growth from here may be slow. Hnd.

Ladbroke bounces back

What a difference a year makes. Exactly 12 months ago, Ladbroke, the hotels and gaming group, issued a profit warning blaming difficult trading in its betting and gaming division on the start of the National Lottery and the introduction of instant-win scratchcards. The news sent the shares to a 10-year low of 123p. Since then they have outperformed the market by 43 per cent, even after yesterday's 3p fall to 195.5p.

The turnaround has been helped by a fall-off in scratchcard sales, a one per centage point cut in betting duty to 9 per cent, the installation of slot machines in betting shops and the introduction of gambling on the Irish Lottery. Ladbroke has also made the strategically significant decision in

unify the Hilton brand and allow it to be marketed centrally on a world-wide basis. Once the deal with Hilton Hotel Corporation, which owns the Hilton name in the US, is finalised, HHC will hold 5 per cent of Ladbroke's shares.

Yesterday's third-quarter trading update provided little in the way of new detail on the alliance's progress, which is hardly surprising as the deal has yet to be formally ratified. Moreover, its benefits are likely to take several years to show through.

Indeed, apart from news that Ladbroke had received approval for a gaming licence from the state of Nevada, the only new line from the statement was confirmation that Jockey Frankie Dettori's historic seven wins at Ascot in September had cost the betting division £8m. That left profits at Britain's biggest bookie slightly lower than in the corresponding period.

Ladbroke, along with the rest of the racing industry, is countering the prospect of the introduction early next year of a mid-week National Lottery draw by lobbying for a 1.5 per cent cut in the betting duty in the Budget.

BZW has pencilled in pre-exceptional profits for this year of £156m.

rising to £207m next and £235m in 1998, when the forward p.e falls to a market rating of 13.

That looks about right given the buoyant state of the world hotels market, the potential benefits of the Hilton deal and continued recovery in the fortunes of the betting industry.

Bull markets boost Perpetual

Martyn Arbib, chairman of Perpetual, is a very wealthy man. Shares in his fund management group have grown over 10 times since 1992 and as owner of over half of them, he has been the chief beneficiary.

It is a remarkable performance for a company which since the first five years of its existence struggling to stay above its 180p float price.

The question is whether it can continue. The signals from yesterday's results for the year to September pointed in different directions. On the positive side, the 46 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £37.2m was another stunning result for a company which made much less than a tenth of that in the opening years of the decade. These sparkling figures came on the back of a 40 per cent increase in funds under management in £6.6m.

But there lies the rub. Perpetual's strong track record and well-honed marketing skills pulled in another £1.1bn of funds over the past year, helping to cement its market leadership in unit trust-linked personal equity plans. The group also lifted its overall market share in the market for authorised unit trusts from 3.7 to 4.2 per cent.

Few could question such a performance, but without much effort, fund managers gain a double lift during a bull phase for the stock market, like now.

Rising markets tend to suck in new money and new punters, particularly the relatively unsophisticated sort who are attracted to unit trusts. Meanwhile, rising share values automatically boost funds under management, with Perpetual gaining another £800m over the latest 12 months.

Mr Arbib's gentle warning yesterday over the heights at which shares round the world are trading left his own shares at £22.25, down 102.5p. That is the main problem ahead for Perpetual and explains why profits could range between £57m and £65m this year, putting the shares on a forward price/earnings ratio of 17. Given the uncertainties, purchases should be deferred.

British Telecom: at a glance

Market value: £23.5bn, share price 369.5p

Trading record	1994	1995	1996	1995	1996
Pre-tax profits (£m)	2.76	2.68	3.02	1.61	1.60
Dividends per share (pence)	15.7	17.7	18.7	7.45	7.90

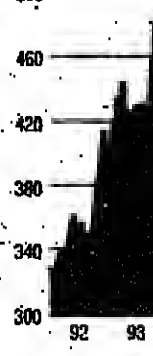
Sales by business

Latest 6 months, £bn



Share price

pence



Ibstock chief set for £1½m payoff

Magnus Grimond

Boardroom payoffs totalling close to £1m were in prospect yesterday as Ibstock, Britain's biggest brick-maker, and Ricardo, the automotive design engineers, both lost their chief executives.

Ibstock is expected to pay out just over £500,000 following the announcement that Ian Macellan, the managing director, is to resign after losing the confidence of the board. The news comes after a period of upheaval at Ibstock, whose £160m acquisition of Redland's brick business earlier this year propelled it to the number one position in the market.

Mr Macellan, who took over the top job five years ago after being finance director for 10 years, is being replaced by Philip Mengel, the chief executive of Ibstock's Glen-Gery US subsidiary since 1990. Commenting on the change-over, a company spokesman said: "It was felt by the board that Ian is extremely good at dealing with the finances and the financial structure, but is not the man to take the group forward at an operational level. Philip Mengel, having run the US operation, is seen as the man who could pull the team together and take the group forward."

Mr Macellan, who will leave at the end of the year, is on a three-year contract at a current salary of £182,000 a year. He said yesterday that, as a result of the Redland acquisition, Ibstock now had a UK operation with great profit potential for the long term. "I am proud of these achievements on behalf of the company and am pleased now to hand over, as chief executive, to my colleague Philip Mengel who, I am confident, is the right man to lead the company in the next phase of its development."

Sir Colin Hope, chairman, said integrating the Redland business and Ibstock's brick assets acquired in 1995 will be the

first task facing Mr Mengel. He said they were making "satisfactory progress" with the integration of Redland.

In a separate move, Ricardo said its board had dismissed Christopher Ross, chief executive, "with immediate effect" to replace him with Rodney Westhead, the finance director. No reasons were given for the dismissal of Mr Ross, who has been in the job four years.

However, the indications were that he would be entitled to pick up a compensation payment of around £430,000. He was paid a salary of £215,000 and his contract laid down a notice period of two years.

\$74m Biotech deal opens up Japan's market

Magnus Grimond

British Biotech has taken a big step in completing world-wide distribution for its Marimastat anti-cancer drug with the announcement of a \$74m (£44.5m) development and marketing deal with Tanabe Seiyaku, Japan's eighth-biggest pharmaceutical group. In exchange for exclusive marketing rights in Japan, Tanabe will take on the Japanese development of the drug and make an initial payment of \$7m, with up to \$67m more depending on a successful launch. Biotech will also receive royalties on sales in Japan thought to be "significantly higher than 25 per cent".

Typically, Western companies doing deals in Japan are lucky to obtain royalties of 15 per cent, according to one broker. Japan is the last big market still to be cracked by Marimastat. The drug is currently in phase III trials in Europe and North America, the last hurdle to what is hoped will be official approval and first sales in the West in around 1999.

Japan has around 2 million cancer patients, about a quarter of European and North American markets put together. But Biotech has always faced much greater obstacles in breaking into the market, given the requirement that new drugs must be tested on Japanese patients before receiving official

approval. As a result, the group has been looking for a partner to help launch the product in Japan for some time.

A company spokeswoman said: "For a company at this stage of development, it would not be a very useful use of shareholders' funds if we went about setting up a subsidiary over there when we can work with an already established company." Trials of Marimastat in human patients are expected to start in Japan next year and, if all goes well, brokers expect it to hit the Japanese market around 2002. Tanabe was chosen partly because it was more sanguine about the launch date for Marimastat than some of its rivals, which suggested the process could take up to 14 years.

The Osaka-based Tanabe, which dates its foundation to 1678, had sales of £2bn last year. The group's best-known product is Cardizem, a cardiovascular drug launched in 1989 which is distributed in the rest of the world by Hoechst Marion Roussel and is said to be still the world's 18th best-selling pharmaceutical.

Separately, SmithKline Beecham announced that its Hyescantin treatment for cancer of the ovaries had received official EU approval. The drug is a second line of defence for patients with metastatic cancer of the ovary after the failure of initial or subsequent therapy.

IN BRIEF

• Portsmouth & Sunderland Newspapers's first-half profits to 28 September 1996 slipped to £4.68m from £4.8m last time, while the interim dividend rose to 4.25p from 3.86p. Richard Storey, chairman, said the first 26 weeks of the financial year had borne out his prediction of several short-term pressures on profitability. The company spent £14.5m on new presses at Sunderland and Hartlepool, leading to "significant funding costs without any revenue benefits, the start of substantial benefits being expected next financial year", Mr Storey said.

• Paper group Scafe Group's interim profits rose to £30.2m for the six months to 30 September 1996 from £27.7m last year. Chief executive David Dunn warned the strength of sterling could hit overseas earnings, but added: "The paper industry is forecasting a gradual recovery from its recent trough."

• Siebe has won Indian government permission to establish its first manufacturing plant there, paving the way for an initial investment of £8m. The Windsor-based industrial controls maker, which has sold in India since 1933, said it plans to make industrial valves, plant safety shutdown systems and process control equipment at a new factory near Madras.

• Psion shares rose 45p to 441.5p, after the British personal computer maker said it was placing 3.5 million new ordinary shares to raise around £14m to expand business in 1997. Psion said demand for products was ahead of expectations and that current trading performance was on target. The new shares would be placed at 400p each and represent around 5 per cent of the firm's issued ordinary share capital. Dealings start on 19 November.

• Maid, a provider of on-line business information, said its third-quarter pre-tax loss narrowed as sales and subscriber growth continued. Maid posted a pre-tax loss of £2.4m, down from £3.4m last time. For the first nine months of fiscal year 1996, the loss increased to £5.7m from £3m, as Maid stepped up its investments in expanding operations. The company said it had now completed its infrastructure investments and anticipated breaking into profit early next year.

• Appleby Westward Group increased pre-tax profits to £450,000 for the six months to 7 September compared to £191,000 last time and maintained the interim dividend at 3.2p. Chairman Roger Harvey said the second half of the company's financial year had generally been more difficult than the first, but he was confident the outcome for the year as a whole would be satisfactory, especially when compared with the previous three years.

• Shares in Action Computer Supplies, a mail-order supplier of IT products to business users, rose 7 per cent to 142.5p after the company reported a sharp profit rise in its first results since its stock market debut. Action said post-tax profits of £2.058m in the year to 30 August exceeded its forecast of £1.944m made in its flotation prospectus, with turnover up 32 per cent at £134.6m.

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sport

Boro move to allay fears over foreign affairs



One of Boro's boys from Brazil was paraded down at the Riverside Stadium yesterday - not, however, the one the media, and indeed the Middlesbrough management, had gathered to see. The frizzy-haired employee Bryan Robson calls "Emma" was visiting a sick aunt. It may have seemed very Jane Austen, but the ailing relative happened to be somewhere in the north of Brazil.

In the absence, without leave, of the midfielder from Rio, Juninho was wheeled in front of the cameras and tape recorders to prove that Middlesbrough still had at least one boy from Brazil. Whether Emerson will return to join him remains doubtful, even though Robson left ajar a door to possible conciliation. "I have not put a time on Emerson's return," the Middlesbrough manager said, contradicting threats of legal action if the 24-year-old failed to report for training yesterday. "His aunt has been taken ill and he's gone to see her. That's the latest I know. There are bound to be some problems in a club which has 50 players. But you don't expect players to go against contracts, especially

when they are just a few months into them." Emerson, who has played just 14 games since his £4m summer move from Porto, intends to make his premature separation from Middlesbrough a permanent one, citing his wife's failure to take to the Teesside air. His agent, Da Silva Vega, was in Italy yesterday, negotiating on his behalf with Parma. Carlo Ancelotti, coach of the Serie A club, is keen to invest the £4.5m Parma received from the sale of Gianfranco Zola to Chelsea in the uncapped Brazilian. The situation is also being closely monitored by Benfica,

Simon Turnbull on the Teesside club who are trying to sort out problems with their Brazilian contingent

Roma and Barcelona, under whose coach, Bobby Robson, Emerson played at Porto last season. Middlesbrough, however, insist he is not for sale. Indeed, Steve Gibson, the Middlesbrough chairman, has warned he may sue if Emerson fails to return to Teesside. He may also seek a ban by Fifa, the game's world governing body. "Emerson has signed a four

year contract with us," Gibson said. "His future is here and he won't be allowed to leave." Given the circumstances, Juninho's choice of words yesterday were perhaps unfortunate. "I have two years more," he said. "I don't want out." They did little to dispel the belief that being contracted to Middlesbrough, for the foreign legionnaires at least, is some

kind of interment. It was to counter such a growing perception, and to deny in public escape plans attributed to him in an Italian newspaper, that Juninho spoke in public yesterday. With Branco gone, Emerson likely to stay away, Fabrizio Ravanelli reportedly unhappy, and Nick Hamby departed because of a disparity in his pay packet, Middlesbrough's gamble of hiring highly paid foreigners seems to be backfiring. They stand 15th in the Premiership table, with one point from their last six matches - nine places below their station

when Juninho started the influx in November last year. Jamie Pollock, the local lad pushed out by Emerson, was ironically in Bohon yesterday, looking to secure a quick release from his Spanish club, Osasuna. Robin Nichols started following The Boro, as they are known on Teesside, in the days of Fogg, Spraggan and Hickson. Editor of the fanzine *Fly Me To The Moon*, he insisted yesterday that Middlesbrough supporters. "They are just bewildered," he said. "But a lot of fans think people are taking the micky. There was always resentment that these

big name foreign players were coming to Middlesbrough. "Nobody knows what to think at the moment. We just don't know what's going on. There are so many rumours flying about, and they're all bad." Robson took the extraordinary step yesterday of publicly refuting one of them: his resignation. His message was delivered on Middlesbrough's "Livewire" telephone line, which also trumpeted the launch of a book charting the club's last 10 years. "From Doom to Boom," it seems, was a premature choice of title.

Powling's paupers can cash in



Sudbury are ready to surprise Brighton in tomorrow's first round. Rupert Metcalf reports

Fewer a team seemed ripe for plucking by hopeful FA Cup giantkillers, it is Brighton and Hove Albion. Bottom of the Nationwide League and beset by worries over where - or even if - they will be playing home games next season, it is difficult to imagine how their morale can sink any lower.

Sink it will, though, if they lose away to the Suffolk side, Sudbury Town, in tomorrow's first-round tie. While the humiliation for Brighton would not be as extreme as it was in 1973, when as an old Third Division team under Brian Clough's management they were beaten 4-0 at home by Walton and Hertham, it would still be hard to bear.

Much to the chagrin of their long-suffering supporters, the Sussex seaside club are already something of a laughing stock for football's chattering classes, and defeat tomorrow would make that embarrassing situation far, far worse.

It might be expected that Sudbury's manager is only too happy to hear about his opponents' ongoing misfortunes, in the belief that they give his side a greater chance of victory. Richie Powling is, however, full of sympathy for Jimmy Case, his opposite number, and everyone else who cares about beleaguered Brighton.

"No one likes to see a club

in trouble, especially one with such a Cup tradition, but I'm sure they'll turn things round," Powling said.

"Their supporters might not be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel, but when a club hits rock bottom something normally happens to pick them up again, and I'm sure that will be the case with them."

However, Powling of course hopes that Brighton's fortunes do not take a turn for the better after until this weekend. He is realistic about his side's chances of success, though. "If we're honest, eight times out of 10 they're going to beat us," he said, "but the Cup is about dreams and banana skins and we just hope that this might be one of them."

"For the neutral fan, this is one of the ties of the round," Powling added. "They're not having a good season, with all their troubles, and they could be there for the taking. We've obviously got a chance."

Powling knows something of the highs and lows of football. As a tough little wing-half and an England youth international, he signed professional forms for Arsenal in 1973. Over the course of five seasons at Highbury, however, he only managed to appear in 55 League games, before a serious knee injury ended his playing career. Powling moved on to Barnet,



Team changes go up on a blackboard on the toilet wall at the picturesque Priory Stadium, home of Sudbury Town, who are managed by Richie Powling (inset). Photograph: Adam Scott

where he started learning the managerial trade under Barry Fry. After spells in charge of Tipster and Harwich, two Jewish Eastern Counties League clubs, he has been manager of Sudbury since 1992. Now 40, he is employed full-time by the Dr Martens League Premier Division club.

Powling's squad has several players with Football League experience. Tony English (who is also assistant manager), Nicky Smith, Steve Ball, Clive Stafford and Michael Cheetham have all played for Colchester. The tall centre-forward Christian McClellan has been with Northampton, Swansea and Bristol Rovers, while his striking sidekick Ian Brown has turned out

for both Birmingham and Bristol City. However, English and Brown are struggling with injuries - as is the first-choice goalkeeper Steve Moulder, so 19-year-old Dave Walton, released by Watford in the summer, may earn a chance to make a name for himself.

Although this is their debut appearance in the first round of the FA Cup, Sudbury have played at Wembley more recently than Brighton. They went there for the FA Vase final (which they lost to Tamworth in a replay at Peterborough) in 1989 - six years after Brighton's FA Cup final. In 1990 Sudbury were promoted from the Eastern Counties League to the Southern (now Dr Martens)

League, in which Powling took them up to the Premier Division in 1994.

It will be hard to rise any higher, though. "We're the parents of this league," Powling explained. "Sudbury's only a small little market town, so we struggle. We can't afford to get involved in the transfer market."

Although their Priory Stadium is picturesque, it is inadequate for anything loftier than their present level. Sudbury are awaiting planning permission for a new stadium, which they hope to start building within the next two years - so a continuation of this season's Cup run will provide much-needed revenue as well as much-appreciated prestige.



League clubs end strike threat

The threat of a strike by Nationwide League players was ended yesterday when League clubs agreed a new funding deal with the Professional Footballers' Association.

Under the terms of the new deal, the PFA will receive £750,000 per year for five years, with a further £600,000 a year allocated by the clubs to spend on mutually agreed projects.

The first payment, replacing the £560,000 the union received last season, will go on benevolent packages, insurance and player education. The second sum will be allocated following discussions between the clubs and the PFA, although the precise process has yet to be determined.

The new package was agreed following a 30-minute discussion by chairmen and representatives of all 72 clubs in London. The Football League secretary, Andy Williamson, said: "Obviously we are pleased that this saga has now been brought to a satisfactory conclusion. It means that supporters and our commercial partners can be assured that there will be no disruption to the League's programme."

The PFA had balloted its members on strike action after the clubs scrapped the long-running tradition of paying the union a 10 per cent levy from television screening rights. This season the League began a five-year, £125m TV deal with BSkyB, and the PFA chief executive, Gordon Taylor, initially demanded that the payment be restored.

However, after the players from the 72 clubs made their vote - understood to be overwhelmingly in favour of industrial action - Taylor pulled back from the brink in order to begin further negotiations. Those talks clearly bore fruit, although Williamson stressed that there had been "compromise" on both sides.

The Football League president, Gordon McKeag, was yesterday served notice to quit after clubs overwhelmingly backed a call for a radical overhaul of the League's structure.

The Ipswich chairman David Sheepshanks, Ron Davies of Crystal Palace, Jonathan Hayward of Wolves and Oldham's Ian Stott proposed the change which will see the seven-man board replaced by a new nine-man body.

While McKeag will keep his title until he steps down next summer, he will immediately relinquish his position as board chairman if the move is agreed at an emergency general meeting of clubs next month.

Scramble for pay TV, page 21

TODAY'S FIXTURES

Football
FA CUP FIRST ROUND
Widow's Crick v. Macclesfield
NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE
FIRST DIVISION
Tottenham v. Charlton (7.45)
SUNDERLAND v. Ipswich
Sheff Wed v. Shrewsbury
Sheff Utd v. Doncaster
Hull City v. Notts County
Hull City v. Notts County
Hull City v. Notts County

Cricket

TOUR MATCH (First day of Test)
Australia v. England
at Sydney
England v. Australia
at Sydney
England v. Australia
at Sydney

Other sports

SWANSEA: Swansea v. Cardiff
SWANSEA: Swansea v. Cardiff
SWANSEA: Swansea v. Cardiff

TODAY'S NUMBER

159

The number of goals scored by Arsenal, following his two in the Coca-Cola Cup against Stoke City on Wednesday. Wright needs another 20 to break Cliff Bastin's record and become the all-time leading scorer at Highbury.

Brolin fears for his future

Leeds United's unsettled Swedish striker Tomas Brolin fears that his career may be over following the collapse of his loan move to Sampdoria.

The Swedish international believes it is unlikely that any club will employ him, after he failed a medical as he was on the verge of signing for the Italian Serie A side until the end of the season, with a view to a permanent £2m move.

"It's going to be tough. Word gets around," said Brolin, whose chances of moving to Italy were scuppered by a metal staple in his foot.

The 26-year-old was astonished by the doctor's decision that he would have to have the staple and screws - inserted after he broke his foot in November 1994 - removed before he could be passed fit.

Doctors at his three previous clubs - Parma, Leeds and FC Zurich - had all passed him fit, Brolin claimed.

"I met Sampdoria in Lyon and negotiated. The only thing remaining was a doctor's certificate and they sent me to a doctor for an examination," the Leeds forward explained.

"It was a purely routine thing and the thing I was least concerned about. And then the doctor said the staple had to be taken out before he would recommend me for Sampdoria. He thought the staple would give me problems in training and games."

"I was in shock when I left the doctor's. I can hardly believe it would end up like this."

Brolin has had a stormy 18 months since leaving Parma for Leeds for £4.5m. He fell out

with the former Leeds manager, Howard Wilkinson, and has been unable to patch things up with the new manager, George Graham, who tried to prevent Brolin continuing his loan with Zurich.

Leeds threatened legal action if he did not return to Elland Road. Brolin then threatened to retire and, ironically, he may be forced into that if he decides not to have the staple removed.

"I don't have much hope that Sampdoria will change their minds," he added, saying it would take six to eight weeks after an operation before he could play.

Reports linking both Tottenham Hotspur and Leicester City with another Swedish international forward, Jesper Blomqvist, have been quashed by the announcement that the

fleet-footed winger has left IFK Gothenburg for Milan.

The Italian Serie A club have paid an undisclosed fee for Blomqvist, who will sign a four-and-a-half year contract with Milan. They will pay around £2m for the 22-year-old striker, who will arrive in Milan early next month.

The Norwich City midfielder Ian Crook was yesterday fined £250 by the Football Association after admitting signing for two clubs at the same time. In June Crook was released by Norwich and agreed to join Ipswich - but within two days he returned to Norwich after Mike Walker had been re-appointed manager. He signed registration forms with Norwich before the contract he had agreed with Ipswich was declared invalid.

The Tottenham Hotspur plc chairman, Alan Sugar, warned shareholders at the company's annual general meeting yesterday of the "most devastating implications" of last year's European Union Bosman ruling on the transfer system.

Sugar insisted that the Bosman ruling, which allows players to move within Europe on free transfers at the end of their contracts, is a tremendous threat to the future of the game. He said: "We've faced all sorts of disasters in every season since I've been at the club but nothing as damaging as the effects of the Bosman ruling."

"It is the greatest danger facing this club and the rest of football. Even clever people such as Sir John Hall at Newcastle don't understand the ramifications of Bosman."

Sugar added the industry has "not yet seen the worst of it", adding that the ruling is a "licence for [football] agents to print money". Agents are now telling players not to sign long-term contracts, and this is undermining Tottenham's plan to build a strong squad of depth based on a strong youth policy.

Sugar claimed. He said it is up to English clubs to stand up to the agents - to "hard nose them" and "be tough".

Tottenham investors' anger against the club's management was directed at the club's failure to make any major signings for the current season, which is now one third over.

One shareholder drew loud applause when he said that some members of the club's playing staff are "not good enough for Tottenham Hot-

spur. We want the best", he said. Sugar and the team manager, Gerry Francis, said the search for quality players is continuing, but the competition is tough. Sugar said it remains his personal goal to win the Premiership but "these things cannot be achieved in a flash-in-the-pan manner."

Sugar convinced the AGM that the club was in safe hands. He said: "People question my motives at Tottenham but the only thing I've got out of the club since 1991 is unadulterated stick."

"The profits belong to the club and not me. I see it as a personal challenge to make Tottenham successful. I will probably never be a popular character here, no chairman ever is, but you could have had Robert Maxwell."

A tale of a Romanian referee and a Portuguese hotelier

Portugal

Aberdeen and their former manager, Alex Ferguson, have unwittingly been linked this week with a bribery scandal which has been causing a stir in the Portuguese papers.

Portuguese police have questioned a businessman over his allegations that he sought to bribe a Romanian referee on behalf of FC Porto 12 years ago, prior to a European Cup-Winners' Cup semi-final against the Dutch when the Manchester United manager was in charge at Pittodrie.

Fernando Barata, a hotel owner and the former chairman of another Portuguese club, Farense, has claimed that he had been asked by Porto to

speak to the referee before the first leg. He said he had been asked to fix a 3-0 victory for Porto, but has not said how much money was offered. Porto won both the home and away legs 1-0.

Porto have fiercely denied the allegations but Uefa, European football's governing body, has sought an explanation from the Portuguese Football Association. The referee, Ioan Igna, also claimed ignorance of the bribery claims.

"I'm totally surprised about these allegations," Igna said in Bucharest yesterday. "I don't know this person who is making accusations. I've never spoken to him." He said Porto had provided all three Romanian officials for the match with air tickets, accommodation and food.

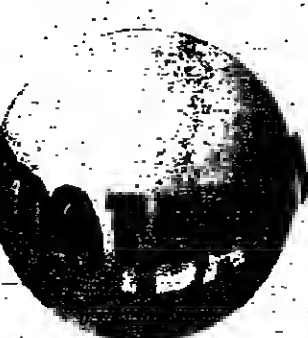
"They gave me a watch, a little flag and a badge for presents. Nothing else."

"This is a war of words within the Portuguese media. It has nothing to do with me. I remember Porto were even angry at me after the match for not awarding a penalty."

The Portuguese players' union has called for an immediate investigation into the allegations, which, it claimed, were "threatening the image and credibility" of Portuguese football.

Brazil

There is, it seems, never a peaceful weekend in Brazilian football. A



AROUND THE WORLD

goalkeeper beaten up by fans following a league match last Tuesday. Ricardo Pinto, of the league leaders Atletico Paranaense, needed a three-hour operation after a small clot developed on his brain.

Pinto was injured following his team's 3-2 win away to the bottom club, Fluminense, in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday. He suffered concussion and needed stitches in a head wound after dozens of Fluminense fans scaled the fences around the pitch after the final whistle. Some attacked Pinto, who lashed out before being knocked to the ground. He was carried to the dressing-room by Atletico officials.

A Fluminense official said Pinto was hit by a fan. "He provoked the fans. There is not a fence in the world that could contain an enraged multitude."

The previous weekend, there was chaos at the Maracana stadium when directors from both clubs interrupted a league game between Vasco da Gama and Botafogo to protest at refereeing decisions.

Play was delayed for more than 20 minutes when Eurico Miranda, a Vasco director and a member of the Brazilian Congress, ran on to the pitch to complain about the goal which gave Botafogo a 1-0 lead. Vasco scored twice following the interruption but, after their second goal, the president of Botafogo, Carlos Alberto Montenegro, followed Miranda's example and rushed on to demonstrate with the referee.

Miranda also threatened police who tried to usher him off the pitch - by warning them that he enjoyed parliamentary immunity.

Vietnam

A Vietnamese international, Chu Van Mui, has been banned for life for leading an attack on the referee at the country's cup final last month.

Mui's team assaulted the official after they had been beaten 3-1 by a provincial side, Dong Thap, in the televised cup final. The referee was kicked and punched and chased round the stadium. Mui was judged to have led the charge by his team - Ho Chi Minh City Police.

The ban was not the end of Mui's problems - he has also been demoted a rank in the national constabulary.

Rupert Metcalf



Powling's paupers

Sudbury could be the surprise packet in the FA Cup, page 26

sport

Return of Welsh wizard

Jonathan Davies eyes Test recall against the Wallabies, page 27



Big changes promised by Strachan

Football
TOMMY STANFORTH

The new Coventry City manager, Gordon Strachan, yesterday gave a "do things my way or there will be changes" ultimatum to his players as he surveyed the wreckage following the worst possible start to life in the Highfield Road hot seat.

The Coca-Cola Cup has not been Strachan's favourite competition in recent years, with his previous club, Leeds United, suffering a string of embarrassing results against lower division opposition most notably Third Division Mansfield two years ago.

But even they paled into insignificance compared with Wednesday's 1-0 third-round replay home defeat to Second Division Gillingham – a performance the like of which Strachan will not tolerate again.

Strachan, reflecting in the aftermath of his first match since replacing Ron Atkinson, said: "If I fail it will be because we've done things my way and not anybody else's way."

"The performances will change and, if the players listen to what I have to say, and play to the level of standard and effort I require, then they should be all right."

"If they decide to join me and where I'm wanting to go with the club, then fine, but if not then there will have to be changes. It is up to the players."

"Maybe on this last occasion the lads were too nervous and trying too hard to get me a win. I don't know about that, but certainly myself and everyone con-

nected with the club can't put up with a performance like that again."

"Gillingham were well-organised and wanted it more than us. They wanted to win the scrappy ball more than us and it's when you win the battle that you can play the football."

Strachan admitted: "I had some horrendous results in the League Cup at Leeds. I've had hody blows before but that doesn't mean that it softens the pain this time around. We've also got to be very brave about Wednesday's game and look in the mirror and say: 'That will never happen again.'"

"Leeds had those knock-backs but went on to achieve great things like winning the League championship and qualifying for the European Cup. We've also got to look to bounce back – starting with Wimbledon on Saturday."

Strachan hinted that he is likely to encourage a more direct "shoot-on-sight" policy after his side's chances could be counted on one hand. He said: "If your style of football is very nice-looking but there are no shots on goals or crosses as the end product, then it is failing. There were times against Gillingham when we played some nice football without getting anywhere."

Strachan at least may take heart from the comments of his striker Noel Whelan, who is determined to repay the faith shown in him by his new manager after being charged with drink-driving and becoming involved in a training-ground fight with his team-mate, Dion Dublin.

Whelan said: "I have messed up. I have got myself a bad name by doing what I did and also earned the club some bad remarks which isn't fair. I want to rectify my mistakes by doing well, getting sorted out and scoring some goals."

Charlton's England Under-21 defender Jamie Stuart could be back in action within two weeks after being injured at Liverpool on Wednesday. The Charlton manager, Alan Curtis, believed his 20-year-old left-back had suffered a broken leg during a challenge with Michael Thomas in his side's 4-1 Coca-Cola Cup replay defeat at Anfield. However, X-rays revealed that Stuart, who was carried off in the 56th minute, had suffered only severe bruising.

Neil Ruddock looks likely to retain his place in the Liverpool starting line-up and revive his Premiership career at Leeds on Saturday. His manager, Roy Evans, gave him his chance against Charlton at the expense of Phil Babb and Ruddock responded superbly. Babb had been an ever-present this season but paid the price for a poor game in the 3-0 defeat against Blackburn. Now the former Tottenham defender appears set for a run in the team after withdrawing a transfer request.

Evans saluted him following the victory over Charlton: "Razor has had to be patient. But we have thrown him in and he has responded in a way we would have hoped."

"We have a big squad and that can give you a headache. We have a lot of good players and it is a problem many people would like to have."



Jeremy Bates feel the pressure as he bows out of the National Championships in Telford yesterday

Report, page 27; photograph, Allsport

Botham back in England fold

Cricket
ADAM SZRETER

No sooner has Raymond Illingworth turned his back on the England Test scene than Ian Botham, effectively barred from office during Illingworth's term as chairman of selectors, has strolled in at the invitation of David Lloyd, the England coach, and will act as technical adviser on this winter's tour of Zimbabwe and New Zealand.

Botham, who has been limited to media work since his retirement as a player three years ago, will be on the winter tour as a Sky TV commentator. But, as Lloyd revealed yesterday, he

will also be involved in bowling coaching as England try to prepare for next summer's Ashes series against Australia.

Lloyd said: "I have wanted Ian to be involved with us for some time. And this winter we will be using his technical skills – especially on the bowling side. Ian is very happy to be asked – and the invitation has come from me. I have been mates with him for a long time and this is a personal arrangement."

It is not thought that any money is involved but Botham's unofficial appointment represents a major coup for Lloyd, who took over as England coach on a full-time, two-year

contract at the end of the summer after initially being given the job on a trial basis back in April.

The England team leave for their 14-week tour on 25 November and Botham is expected in Zimbabwe shortly before the first of two Tests against the Zimbabweans either side of Christmas. England then play three Tests in New Zealand in the New Year.

Botham was frequently outspoken during his record-breaking but turbulent Test career, most notably in his description of the England selectors as "gin-swilling doddlers". That and a number of other transgressions, including smoking

cannabis – for which he was banned for three months – and being charged after an assault during an aeroplane flight in Australia, ensured that Botham would not find it easy to get back into the England set-up at any level following his final Test match, against Pakistan at Lord's in 1992.

At the start of last season he was nominated as an England selector by Northamptonshire and Derbyshire but was soundly beaten in the election by Graham Gooch and David Gray. Botham's newspaper and television commitments, plus his own admission that he did not relish the prospect of watching endless hours of coun-

ty cricket, undoubtedly counted against him.

Later in the summer, along with his former England team-mate Allan Lamb, Botham lost a protracted and costly libel action against the former Pakistan captain Imran Khan, which many observers felt did little for the game's image, or that of Botham himself.

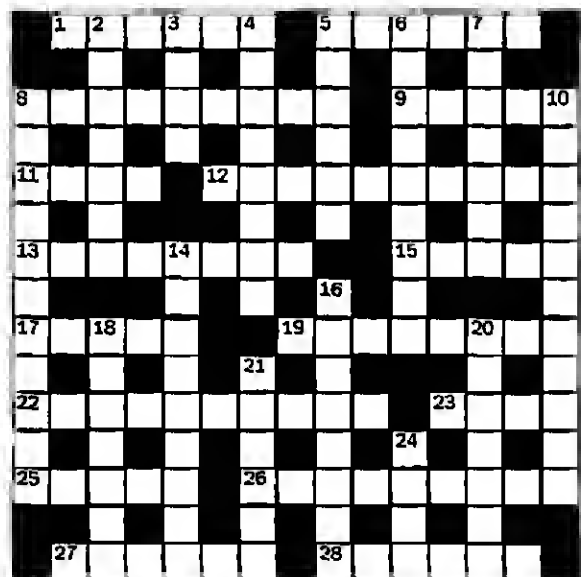
Now Botham, whose coaching at the moment extends to the Sultan of Brunet's son, has been given the green light by Lloyd but, great all-rounder though he was, it remains to be seen whether he has the capacity to translate his extraordinary natural ability into language that gifted players can understand.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3145, Friday 15 November

By Mass

Monday's Solution



- ACROSS**
- 1 Girl, US student, reduced to one high grade (6)
 - 5 Fancy Don't (10)
 - 8 It's Oscar Wilde's last letter, composed in exile (9)
 - 9 Drained, drawn, without vigour ultimately (5)
 - 11 Dress (sack) making comeback (4)
 - 12 Homely piece containing music for certain bells? (10)
 - 13 Music piece in English paper in NE (8)
 - 15 Bank in South, drawing out very small figure (5)
 - 17 March during physical training, with roundabout route? (5)
 - 19 Salad plant, now, among crinkled prunes (8)
 - 22 Just the places for airing suits (10)
 - 23 Crook's new in the patch (4)
 - 25 Tilt point during bit of fencing (5)
 - 26 Show sheet introducing an essay (10)
 - 27 Survives for ages (4,2)
 - 28 Go for record in sudden dash (6)
- DOWN**
- 2 Faulty column? Must be the settlement (7)
 - 3 NUT? (4)
 - 4 Spanish location for a fiction without dialect? (8)
 - 5 Cautions the Parisian engaged in deceptions (6)
 - 6 Sends up flag bordered with jacks (9)
 - 7 Damage most of Anne's tent? (7)
 - 8 Punishing circumstances? One yields to nothing, being prepared (2,3,6)
 - 10 Drafted at random, always roped in? Yes, continually (4)
 - 14 Act, disarmingly, you might say (9)
 - 16 Searched for drink, reportedly vintage (8)
 - 18 Flatter – otherwise laud – with a note (7)
 - 20 'The Accomplish', a play that's over the hill? (7)
 - 21 Success, getting ahead? That's the ticket (6)
 - 24 Distortion's offensive on page (4)

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Damon Hill returned to the cockpit yesterday for the first time since winning the world championship. This is what happened...

Four weeks after winning the Japanese Grand Prix to clinch the Formula One World Drivers' Championship, Damon Hill was forced to take in another view of Suzuka's scenery. Hill crashed heavily while testing tyres at the Suzuka circuit yesterday in his first session with his new Arrows team, but escaped unhurt. He was driving a Ligier for the planned two-day test – because he is too tall to fit in the Arrows car which has not yet been adapted for him – and lost control of his car at low speed on cold tyres on the exit of the hairpin and spun around before colliding with the wall on the inside of the track.

The impact ripped two corners off the car and wrecked the gearbox, causing the Arrows team to abandon testing a day early. The team were evaluating the Bridgestone tyres which they plan to use next season.

Hill triumphed at Suzuka on 13 October in his final grand prix



Off target: The Ligier car (left) of the Arrows team, towed off the Suzuka track after being crashed by Damon Hill (above). Photographs: Empics

than 1.5sec. Hill said before: "The purpose of this was to get out there and establish where they [the tyres] stand, and what their potential is. "There will be the opportunity to go into several different directions, I expect, so it's important for me to get up to speed with them."

for Williams-Renault, who sacked him for the 1997 season in favour of the German rookie Heinz-Harald Frentzen. It was

Hill's eighth grand prix win of the season and 21st in all. Signed by Tom Walkenshaw's Arrows team in late September,

Hill had impressed his new team before crashing. He set a best lap of 1min 40.14sec, which broke the lap record for the car by more

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